"CHRISTIAN CRITICISM" IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY:
A SURVEY OF THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LITERATURE

by

Norman Reed Cary

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Office for Graduate Studies,

Graduate Division of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1968

MAJOR: ENGLISH

APPROVED BY:

Emerson R. Marks 11/12/68
Adviser Date

Daniel Hyde

John P. Cutts

Raymond Hoekstra

Alfred Silvaroli, Grad. Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am particularly indebted to my adviser, Professor Emerson R. Marks, for his encouragement and for his prompt criticism of the dissertation in progress. I am also grateful to my wife, Cecile, for her sympathy even while in the throes of writing her own dissertation. And I would like to thank my colleague Carol Steinhagen for her aid in proofreading the manuscript.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: CRITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND 1

Initial Remarks
Critical Antecedents to Christian Criticism
The Theological Milieu of Christian Criticism

CHAPTER TWO: THE RELATIONSHIP OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH TO ARTISTIC TRUTH 60

Natural Theology and Christian Criticism
Theology of Culture and Christian Criticism
Secular Theology and Christian Criticism
Appendix: Radical Secularism and the Death of God

CHAPTER THREE: THE CREATIVE ACT IN THEOLOGY AND ART: CREATION, INCARNATION, AND TRINITY 100

The Doctrine of the Creation
The Doctrine of the Incarnation
The Doctrine of the Trinity

CHAPTER FOUR: SACRAMENT, SYMBOL, AND MYTH 136

Sacramentalism and Criticism
Symbol and Myth
Appendix: Austin Farrer

CHAPTER FIVE: THE TRAGIC AND THE COMIC 168

The Tragic
The Comic

CONCLUSION 232

LIST OF WORKS CITED 243

CHAPTER ONE

CRITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

Initial Remarks

During the past several decades a number of critics have appeared who have brought Christian insights to bear on literature more strenuously and more systematically than ever before. This is not to say that anything like a common approach exists among them; there are probably as many variations of critical attitude and methodology as there are critics. But the fact that they all attempt to relate Christianity to literature tempts one to group them together, to see them as forming something like a movement in the direction of "Christian Criticism."

It may be asked why Christian Criticism is referred to as a recent phenomenon. Have there not been, through the centuries, critics who have been Christians and who have brought their faith into their criticism? The names of Sir Philip Sidney, Dr. Samuel Johnson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge come immediately to mind as examples. Sidney's Apology for Poetry defends poetry not only on classical grounds but from Scripture as an inculcator of Christian morality; indeed, as

William K. Wimsatt, Jr. points out, Sidney gives poetry "the highest literary palm after the Scriptures."[1] Dr. Johnson also judges from a Christian standpoint; sometimes, indeed, as René Wellek claims, to the detriment of his criticism, for his "didactic criterion often becomes a demand for more moralizing."[2] Wellek then proceeds to list the famous moralisms: the demand for poetic justice (especially in Lear and Measure for Measure); the condemnation of Fielding, Sterne, and Swift on moral grounds; and the position that Christian piety is not a proper subject for poetry. Some fifty years later Coleridge, the father of modern criticism, also expressed what he conceived to be a Christian conviction when he wrote: "It is my earnest desire--my passionate endeavour--to enforce at various times and by various arguments and instances the close and reciprocal connection of just taste with pure morality."[3]

The difference between these older critics who were Christians and the new Christian Critics is that in the work of the older critics Christianity was largely implicit, and in the new Christian Criticism it is largely explicit. The older critics, up through the time of Coleridge (who was perhaps the last major critic who was able to do

[1]William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York, 1959), p. 169.

[2]A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, I (New Haven, 1955), 82.

[3]"Shakespeare's Judgment Equal to His Genius," The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd, IV (New York, 1871), 52.

this), could more or less assume that both their readers and the writers they were commenting upon were Christians. The corpus christianum was still intact, if not in terms of ecclesiastical unity at least in terms of the expectation that men in the civilized world shared what C. S. Lewis has, in our lifetime, called "Mere Christianity."

This situation, as everyone knows, has altered radically since the early nineteenth century until the Christian in the latter part of the twentieth century feels himself in essential opposition to the non-Christianity of society at large.[4] Following the general cultural trend,

[4]I do not mean to suggest that the movement away from a common Christianity began as late as the nineteenth century. Roman Catholic scholars often regard the Middle Ages as the period of ideal unity, and secularization beginning, coincidentally, with the Renaissance and the Reformation. Martin Turnell sees opposition as the last of five stages: "In the first the writer is living in a society which generally speaking is Christian . . . . his work is a reflection of the communal outlook even if he is not dealing with a specifically Christian subject . . . . In the second phase there is a break in the pattern. The community is divided into a large number of warring factions and conflicting outlooks. The Church is replaced by the churches; Theology by the theologies; Philosophy by the philosophies; Science by the sciences. The literature of this phase is dominated by a feeling of unrest, by the writer's sense of living in an age of crisis . . . . A third phase might be called the Age of Compromise. It is . . . the period of the Counter-Reformation and Baroque art. The Christian artist tries to come to terms with the new experience and new insights released by the upheavals of the previous century . . . . In the fourth phase literature divides into two main classes: religious and secular. The Christian writer, so far from feeling himself a member of a homogeneous society, is very clearly a member of a minority, and his work is coloured by his isolation . . . . In the final phase, the sense of belonging to a minority is transformed into the sense of belonging to the opposition. It is in this phase . . . that an internal conflict seems to arise between the writer's artistic experience and a religion which is held intellectually." This is the modern period. (Modern Literature and the Christian Faith [Westminster, Md., 1961], pp. 2-3.)

literary critics as a rule have disassociated themselves from Christianity; as a result the modern critic who wants to deal with literature from a Christian standpoint has not found direct precedent in the literary criticism of the past 150 years which constitutes what is inevitably the critical milieu for him. So he has had self-consciously to introduce Christianity into his criticism. It is ironic that the Christian Critics who have striven to do this have discovered that the very criticism which seemed hostile or unconcerned with Christianity afforded valuable hints for them. Evidently the critics of the past century and a half have not been able to free themselves entirely from the faith residual in the culture; as the modern theologian Paul Tillich puts it: "The scars of the Christian tradition cannot be erased; they are a character indelebilis."[5] It is my initial aim in this introductory chapter to discuss what can be seen in literary criticism as "preparatory," offering what were picked up by the Christian Critics as clues.

The second part of this chapter will deal with the theological milieu of the Christian Critics. Because of the "opposition" status of Christianity in a world which is hostile or indifferent to it, the Christian Critics have been forced, in a way that surely would have seemed unnecessary to their forebears in the faith, to spell out their positions as Christians. Furthermore, the religious situation, despite growing pressures towards ecumenicity, is still extremely fragmented.

[5]Systematic Theology, I (Chicago, 1951), 27.

There are competing traditions among Christians, and competing theologies within the same traditions. Therefore it is necessary for the Christian Critic to draw his lines carefully, distinctly stating what theological position he is speaking from and what doctrines he is employing in his approach to literature. It is noteworthy that there are aspects of modern theology which show some of the same intellectual marks of the age that literary criticism shows. Certain modern theologies, especially the Protestant theology of Paul Tillich, the Roman Catholic Neo-Thomism, and Anglican Incarnational theology, also offer valuable openings to the world of literature, openings which I hope to explore.

Critical Antecedents to Christian Criticism

As I have remarked earlier, the intellectual world has moved steadily away from Christianity; this movement has been largely towards an increasing enchantment with scientific knowledge and techniques, and has been accompanied by an increasing distrust of the artistic as well as the religious. An early instance of this attitude is found in Thomas Love Peacock's The Four Ages of Poetry (1820), which sees the poet rendered useless and anachronistic by the advance of science. Reacting against this scientism, Shelley in A Defence of Poetry (1821) anticipates the attitude of most critics since, when he does not look to Christianity but to poetry for a knowledge superior to science, claiming that "poets . . . are not only the authors of language and of music, of the dance, and architecture, and statuary, and painting; they are the institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society, and the

inventors of the arts of life, and the teachers who draw into a certain propinquity with the beautiful and the true, that partial apprehension of the agencies of the invisible world which is called religion."[6] This transferring of spiritual, prophetic power from the religionist to the poet is extremely significant; we shall see this line of suggestion taken up again and again by the Christian Critics.[7]

Whereas Shelley definitely set himself against traditional religion, and as a young man even declared himself an atheist, Matthew Arnold's attitude towards religion was not a positive rebellion but rather a regretful sadness that traditional Christianity was no longer viable in an enlightened age that had exploded its dogmas as incredible fairy tales. "The object of religion is conduct," Arnold wrote. In fact, God means goodness; Luther took the word God to mean "the best that man knows or

[6]The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, VII (New York, 1930), 112.

[7]William K. Wimsatt, Jr. notices that there are parallels between the Defenses of Sidney and Shelley: they both speak of the poet as the earliest author and prophet. "The difference between them, nevertheless, could scarcely be more profound . . . . It amounts to this: that Sidney in all his talking about the teaching and persuading power of poetry would never dream that poetry was teaching and persuading any doctrine which it did not discover in some legislatively competent authority outside itself, either scriptural revelation or ethical philosophy. With Shelley just the opposite is true. When he talks about poetry getting at the motives for good action, touching the heart by enkindling the imagination, he may sound for a moment almost pre-Cartesian, forensic, homiletic. The words are, nevertheless, part of an appeal for a vastly creative and autonomous power. There is no appeal to any other authority. The limits of the power come not from outside it but from within. Or, there are no limits. There is no specifically doctrinal commitment" (Literary Criticism: A Short History, pp. 422-423).

can know; and, in this sense, as a matter of fact and history, mankind constantly use the word." Elsewhere, Arnold says that the notion of God is "a consciousness of the not ourselves which makes for righteousness." Anything more elaborate than this in the way of metaphysics or dogmatizing or supernaturalism is "Aberglaube," extra-belief which is literary language wrongly assigned scientific status, the status of factuality.[8] Separating out fact from poetic power to move one to righteousness, Arnold is led to the famous prediction quoted in "The Study of Poetry":

> The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an even surer and surer stay. There is not a creed which is not shaken, not an accredited dogma which is not shown to be questionable, not a received tradition which does not threaten to dissolve. Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact. The strongest part of our religion today is its unconscious poetry.[9]

The cycle is now complete. Whereas poetry was once valued for inculcating religious and moral truth, now poetry is seen itself as religious and moral truth, there being no separable revelation or authority. This extreme didacticism, and the fusing of religious and

[8] Literature and Dogma (New York, 1914), pp. 13, 11, 46, 70.

[9] Essays in Criticism, Second Series, ed. S. R. Littlewood (New York, 1964), p. 1. The passage originally appeared in the introduction to The English Poets, ed. T. H. Ward (London, 1880).

poetic truth, will be a hallmark of much literary criticism after Arnold.

Clearly standing in the Arnold tradition, for instance, are the "New Humanists" of the twentieth century, chiefly Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and Norman Foerster. They took over from Arnold a trust in the classical temper as well as a suspicion of modern romanticism and science. They also, like Arnold, had the expectation that literature would be a serious "criticism of life" providing, it would seem, the wisdom formerly available from religion. But their view of religion was more complex than Arnold's. They favored traditional supernaturalism as an "absolute" standard to oppose to modern relativistic "naturalism," and they looked with favor on such anti-humanitarian doctrines as original sin. In this they harked back to the British critic T. E. Hulme, who in his Speculations protested against contemporary "monism" with the idea that there is a "discontinuity" or radical disjunction between the natural and the supernatural, and who also came down hard for original sin as a central fact of human nature forgotten by the romantics. Paradoxically, however, the New Humanists were chary of committing themselves to "revealed religion," preferring to see the humanistic temper in many religious and cultural contexts.[10] This attitude towards religion comes under attack by T. S. Eliot in several of his essays. In "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" and "Second Thoughts about Humanism"[11] he charges the New Humanists with being parasitical on

[10]See Irving Babbitt's "Humanism: An Essay at Definition," Humanism and America, ed. Norman Foerster (New York, 1930).

[11]Selected Essays, 3rd ed. (London, 1951).

religious values and at the same time unwilling to be more than naturalistic themselves, though they castigate others for naturalism.

Nonetheless, in being concerned with the ethical implications of literature the New Humanists helped create a climate of opinion hospitable to the later Christian Critics. Moreover, their Arnoldian attitude to literature was, despite his unawareness of the fact, to become one of Eliot's own two contradictory positions regarding the relationship of religion and morality to literature; and Eliot's work was to be crucial for the emergence of Christian Criticism.

Quoting Foerster's assertion in American Criticism that he looks for guidance to "Greek sculpture, Homer, Sophocles, Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Horace, Jesus, Paul, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Buddha, Confucius, Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe," Eliot charges that "for a modern humanist, literature thus becomes itself merely a means of approach to something else . . . . but this trick of making literature do the work of philosophy, ethics and theology tends to vitiate one's judgment and sensibility in literature."[12] However, Eliot's own essays reveal, through the years, a moralism and theologism similar to that which he attributes to Foerster and the other New Humanists. But Eliot's theologism is in tension with just the opposite attitude. Eliot insists that literary criticism must deal strictly with poetry itself; but he also advocates and practices (more often than not) a kind of criticism which involves moral and theological judgments.

[12]Eliot, "Second Thoughts about Humanism," Selected Essays, pp. 486-487.

The strictly "literary" criticism has given rise to the New Criticism of the forties and fifties, which generally reflects the insistence of I. A. Richards and Eliot on close reading of the poetic text and the exclusion of biographical and ideological considerations as not properly literary. Eliot's early "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917) is a famous manifesto for this approach. "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry," he warns, and concludes by reminding the reader that "this essay proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry. To divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad." A few years later, in "The Function of Criticism," Eliot states that "a critic must have a very highly developed sense of fact," for the limits of the realm of criticism are narrow: "I do not deny that art may be affirmed to serve ends beyond itself; but art is not required to be aware of these ends, and indeed performs its function, whatever that may be, according to various theories of value, much better by indifference to them. Criticism, on the other hand, must always profess an end in view, which roughly speaking, appears to be the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste."[13]

[13]Eliot, Selected Essays, pp. 17, 21-22, 31, 24.

Do these strictures preclude a criticism which takes theology into account? Eliot's own work would suggest not. The remarks on criticism in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" rest on the assumption that artistic creativity, rather than being an expression of the artist's personal beliefs, is a process of depersonalization: "feelings, phrases, and images" are stored in the poet's mind, which acts as a medium, a catalyst, by which they are united into new combinations. Non-poetic beliefs, "emotions," do not enter the process. The "beliefs" embodied in poetry are thus liable to be the commonplaces of the age, not the idiosyncrasies of the poet. In "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" Eliot seems to have the same sort of idea in mind when he writes that "the great poet, in writing himself, writes his time." Thus Dante became the spokesman for the thirteenth century, Shakespeare the spokesman for the sixteenth. But this does not insure that Dante <u>believed</u> in Thomism, or that Shakespeare <u>believed</u> "the mixed and muddled scepticism of the Renaissance." For it is not the business of the poet to believe, but to "express the greatest emotional intensity of his time, based on whatever his time happened to think. Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy or religion."[14]

In such a situation, where a stable world-view obtains, neither the poet nor the critic feels called upon to concern himself deliberately with theological as opposed to literary matters. However, there may not be any sharp distinction between what is literary and what is

[14]Eliot, <u>Selected Essays</u>, pp. 17-19, 137.

theological in an age of faith. Dr. Johnson, for example, could make Christian judgments in the course of his literary criticism without feeling deliberate or programmatic about them; in an age when Christianity was commonly accepted, no one would be likely to think that they were eccentric or extraneous. In the essay "Johnson as Critic and Poet" (1944) Eliot recognizes, however, that the modern critic, living in a relativistic age, is tempted to ignore the moral value of poetry altogether and attempt to suppress the fact that he, like all readers, is affected by the "ideas" or "views of life" in poetry. On the other hand, Eliot continues, criticism in our unsettled age has tended, in its attempts to relate literature to life, to bring in aesthetics, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Looked at one way this is an enrichment of criticism; looked at from another perspective, there is the danger that literary considerations will become less important than the non-literary ones. But Eliot will neither praise nor disparage this tendency, observing only "It is simply that the conditions under which literature is judged simply and naturally as literature and not another thing, no longer prevail."[15]

It seems that he is admitting that his earlier distinctions between the literary and the non-literary, while they may be ideally desirable, are not workable in the modern world. Thus it is not surprising to notice that elsewhere he follows the logic of this reasoning and recognizes that criticism for the twentieth century Christian in a non-Christian

[15] *On Poetry and Poets* (New York, 1957), p. 221.

society cannot be purely "literary." This recognition is of primary importance, for it is an attempt by the foremost literary critic of our century to legitimize theological criticism. The later Christian Critics often have taken this as their entrée into criticism.

Many of Eliot's later essays reflect this recognition. In the University of Virginia lectures, After Strange Gods, he is still a bit hesitant. The lectures are predominantly an attack on modern literature for being untraditional and possessing only partial and perverted insights into the human condition, and at their outset Eliot denies that this sort of judgment is legitimate literary criticism: it is only moralism. And at the close of the final lecture he adds: "All that I have been able to do here is to suggest that there are standards of criticism, not ordinarily in use, which we may apply to whatever is offered to us as works of philosophy or of art, which might help to render them safer and more profitable for us."[16] We could infer from these remarks that he realizes how rigidly conservative and superficial the moralism is in these lectures; but a year later, in the essay "Religion and Literature," he issues his famous call for theological criticism:

> Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint. In so far as in any age there is common agreement on ethical and theological matters, so far can literary criticism be substantive. In ages like our own, in which there is no such common agreement, it

[16] After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London, 1934), pp. 11-12, 63.

> is the more necessary for Christian readers to scrutinize their reading, especially of works of imagination, with explicit ethical and theological standards. The 'greatness' of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.[17]

Other essays of this period also bring to specific writers moral and theological judgments; it is noteworthy, in the light of "Religion and Literature," that many of these writers are not products of an age of faith. In "Shelley and Keats" Eliot would like to say, with an eye to his "purist" notion of literary criticism, that as a reader one's Christianity is essentially irrelevant. He quotes with approbation I. A. Richards' dictum that "the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well." But he cannot wholly accede to this because he has in fact as a reader found the beliefs of Shelley distasteful to the point of hampering his reading. To solve this problem he advances a principle: "When the doctrine, theory, belief, or 'view of life' presented in a poem is one which the mind of the reader can accept as coherent, mature, and founded on the facts of experience, it interposes no obstacle to the reader's enjoyment, whether it be one that he accept or deny, approve or deprecate."[18] It is because Shelley's poetry does not give evidence of such a "tenable" philosophy that Eliot can dismiss it as immature.

[17]Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 388.

[18]The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London, 1933), pp. 95-96.

I would say that the theory of "wisdom" which Eliot develops in his much more sophisticated essay "Goethe as the Sage" is a refinement and amplification of the idea of maturity in "Shelley and Keats." With the great European poets we must take a wide view of criticism, though there still must be a distinction made between literary and extra-literary criticism: "Literary criticism is an activity which must constantly define its own boundaries; also, it must constantly be going beyond them: the one invariable rule is, that when the literary critic exceeds his frontiers, he should do so in full consciousness of what he is doing. We cannot get very far with Dante, or Shakespeare, or Goethe, without touching upon theology, and philosophy, and ethics, and politics . . . ." The purpose of the essay, he concludes, is more than literary:

> I entered upon this analysis not for its own sake, but in order to reach the conclusion that there is something more in the greatest poetry than 'ideas' of a kind that we must either accept or reject, expressed in a form which makes the whole a work of art. Whether the 'philosophy' or the religious faith of Dante or Shakespeare or Goethe is acceptable to us or not [and, indeed, with Shakespeare, the question of what his beliefs were has never been finally settled] there is the Wisdom that we can all accept. It is precisely for the sake of learning Wisdom that we must take the trouble to frequent these men; it is because they are wise men that we should try, if we find one of them uncongenial, to overcome our aversion or indifference. Of revealed religions, and of philosophical systems, we must believe that one is right and the others wrong. But wisdom is λόγος ξυνός, the same for all men everywhere.[19]

[19]Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, pp. 250, 264.

There are two other ways in which Eliot views the non-Christian poet. Recalling the complaints of the New Humanists against naturalism and materialism, he praises Kipling for preserving an attitude which is at least not naturalistic: "It is not a Christian vision, but it is at least a pagan vision--a contradiction of the materialistic view: it is the insight into a harmony with nature which must be re-established if the truly Christian imagination is to be recovered by Christians."[20] Even higher praise is given to Baudelaire, for he went beyond Kipling in perceiving the supernatural. He indulged in a kind of satanism which is blasphemous but at least is a sign of spiritual awareness, however perverted: "Satanism itself, so far as not merely an affectation, was an attempt to get into Christianity by the back door. Genuine blasphemy, genuine in spirit and not purely verbal, is the product of partial belief, and is as impossible to the complete atheist as to the perfect Christian. It is a way of affirming belief." Baudelaire's poetry centers on a vision of hell, and "the recognition of the reality of Sin is a New Life; and the possibility of damnation is so immense a relief in a world of electoral reform, plebiscites, sex reform and dress reform, that damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation--of salvation from the ennui of modern life, because it at least gives some significance to living." Baudelaire's satanism is more than melodramatic hocus-pocus, Eliot continues; it is evidence of a deep preoccupation with the central problem of good and evil, a preoccupation which is

[20]Eliot, "Rudyard Kipling," On Poetry and Poets, p. 292.

unusual in a scientific age. At the close of the essay, significantly, Eliot indicates that his own concern with sin, especially original sin, grew out not only from his orthodox Anglicanism but also from the influence of T. E. Hulme.[21]

The more universalist type of criticism which Eliot often practices is of prime importance to the Christian Critics. It not only has served to authorize Christian Criticism theoretically, as I have indicated; but it has also suggested specific strategies to the Christian Critics. The Baudelaire essay is particularly helpful in dealing with a "negative witness" to Christianity. What Eliot in "Goethe as the Sage" calls Wisdom is similar to what some Christian Critics will call, more theologically, natural or general revelation. Furthermore, though many of the Christian Critics will not share Eliot's insistence on a Hulmean supernaturalism, they will interest themselves in what transcends the materialistic.

Another modern critic who has displayed something of the same ambivalent attitude towards "extra-literary" criticism, and who was directly influential (much to his displeasure, it must be added) on the embryonic beginnings of Christian Criticism in England, is F. R. Leavis. In insisting on close reading of the poetic text he follows I. A. Richards and is often associated with the New Criticism. He always claimed that he was not a theoretician but a critical reader of specific poems. Eric Bentley, in his introduction to The Importance

[21]Eliot, "Baudelaire," Selected Essays, pp. 421, 427, 430.

of Scrutiny, writes:

> If there is a bed-rock of doctrine, an absolute, at the bottom of his work, it is not a philosophical system, but a doctrine as to procedure, a methodological absolute. Even the method is far from peculiar or idiosyncratic. The assumption is that literature means something, that the meaning or content is bound up with the style or form, and may therefore be discovered by the trained sensibility. Literature means letters, humane letters, men's words. The best literature, as we have already been taught, is the best words in the best order. Literary study, Leavis concludes, means a study of the words and their order.[22]

Thus Leavis repeatedly bristles at those who seem to be distracted by abstract philosophizing. He objects to the suggestion by René Wellek that he clarify and systematize the assumptions behind his criticism: "The reading demanded by poetry is of a different kind from that demanded by philosophy. I should not find it easy to define the difference satisfactorily, but Dr. Wellek knows what it is and could give at least as good an account of it as I could. Philosophy, we say, is 'abstract' (thus Dr. Wellek asks me to defend my position 'more abstractly'), and poetry 'concrete'. Words in poetry invite us, not to 'think about' and judge but to 'feel into' or become--to realize a complex experience that is given in the words."[23]

Eliot's criticism is also censured for being too abstractly Christian and insufficiently concerned with the particularities of literature. Reviewing Eliot's Essays Ancient and Modern, Leavis is scandalized at

[22]New York, 1964, p. xxii.

[23]The Common Pursuit (London, 1952), pp. 212-213.

the religiousness in "Modern Education and the Classics," complaining that "there is, in fact, something very depressing about the way in which, nowadays, he brings out these orthodox generalities, weightily, as substitutes for particularity of statement, rigour of thought, and various other virtues we have a right to expect of him." With his new orthodoxy Eliot is abandoning validly literary criticism for something else, Leavis writes in a review of After Strange Gods:

> When, for instance, he says that he is "applying moral principles" to literature, we cannot accept those principles as alternatives to the criteria we know. "What we can try to do," he says, "is to develop a more critical spirit, or rather to apply to authors critical standards that are almost in desuetude." The first phrase is strictly accurate: we could recover such standards only by the development--as the development--of a more critical spirit out of the capacity for discrimination that we have already. To put it another way: moral or religious criticism cannot be a substitute for literary criticism; it is only by being a literary critic that Mr. Eliot can apply his recovered standards to literature.[24]

Consequently his reaction to Poetry and Personal Responsibility by Brother George Every, an Anglican who was one of the very first critics explicitly to attempt to apply theological criteria to literature, was predictable.[25] Leavis' review, entitled "Christian Discrimination"

[24]Bentley, pp. 286, 277-278.

[25]Since Every was, according to Amos N. Wilder (Theology and Modern Literature [Cambridge, Mass., 1958], p. 85) poetry editor for Eliot's journal The Criterion, it is safe to assume, I think, that Eliot's later criticism influenced the development of Every's own critical theories.

(after the title of an earlier book by Every) exemplifies the caustic and humorless sarcasm for which Leavis is notorious. His charge is similar to the one he leveled against Eliot's religiousness, though it is stated more maliciously:

> As for Christian Discrimination, it needs to be said that there can be no substitute for the scrupulous and disinterested approach of the literary critic. If Christian belief and Christian attitudes have really affected the critic's sensibility, then they will play their due part in his perceptions and judgments, without his summoning his creeds and doctrines to the job of discriminating and pronouncing. If, on the other hand, he does, like Bro. George Every, make a deliberate and determined set at 'discriminating Christianly', then the life of the spirit will suffer damage, more or less severe, in the ways that Bro. George Every's work merely exemplifies with a peculiarly rich obviousness. It is fair to add . . . that he represents the most active and formidable of contemporary 'gang-movements'.[26]

Despite the fact that Leavis condemns philosophizing, he (like Eliot) is at times a quasi-moralist and philosopher. His rejoinder to Eliot's emphasis on orthodoxy is an appeal to his own standards of criticism: "Mr. Eliot has no need to talk hesitantly about the 'need for a religious sense'; he adheres to a religion and can point to his Church and recite its dogmas. Nevertheless, those of us who find no such approach to tradition and orthodoxy possible can only cultivate the sense of health they have." His concern for literary standards and "a sense of health" seems to be his substitute for religious belief. In mourning the passing of a literary journal

[26]Leavis, p. 254.

(The Calendar of Modern Letters) which, like his own Scrutiny, had been concerned with "standards" and "health," Leavis seems to feel that literary criticism is the only basis by which man can maintain culture and interpret his existence:

> The fact that the other traditional continuities have, as the introductory statement of The Calendar points out, so completely disintegrated, makes the literary tradition correspondingly more important, since the continuity of consciousness, the conservation of the collective experience, is the more dependent on it; if the literary tradition is allowed to lapse, the gap is complete . . . . Literary criticism provides the test for life and concreteness; where it degenerates, the instruments of thought degenerate too, and thinking, released from the testing and energizing contact with the full living consciousness, is debilitated, and betrayed to the academic, the abstract, and the verbal. It is of little use to discuss values if the sense for value in the concrete--the experience and perception of value--is absent.[27]

Vincent Buckley, in Poetry and Morality, observes that not only does Leavis regard literature as "the nodal" expression of values: he goes further and "passes imperceptibly . . . to the position where he acknowledges values only as they are subjected to the test of literature, and to the suggestion, which we can't help taking up from him, that literature offers us a final definition of values."[28]

This sounds suspiciously like Arnold's high view of "Culture" as the salutary force in the modern scientific, post-dogmatic age. It is not surprising that Leavis has an extremely high view of Arnold; he even seems to agree with the substance of the notorious introduction

[27]Bentley, The Importance of Scrutiny, pp. 277, 397.

[28]London, 1959, p. 233.

to Arnold's "The Function of Criticism," about which he comments: "Many who deplore Arnold's way with religion will agree that, as the other traditions relax and social forms disintegrate, it becomes correspondingly more important to preserve the literary tradition. When things are as already they were in Arnold's time, they make necessary, whatever else may be necessary too, the kind of work that Arnold undertook for "Culture"--work that couldn't have been done by a theologian as such."[29] We can conclude, then, that Leavis mediated the moralism of Arnold, as well as a respect for the literary text, to the Christian Critics and to the school of "Christian Discrimination" in particular.

Ironically, the man to whom Leavis specifically directed his scorn as a representative of that school very clearly reflects his influence. Even before the attack in the pages of Scrutiny Every recognized that Leavis regarded the arts as "the storehouse of recorded values," and furthermore that he was quite justified in attempting to keep a minority sensitive and informed, to supply them with the critical tools with which they could discriminate between good and bad literature, with which they could avoid the sentimentalism and escapism which infects much that passes for creative literature--with which, to use Eliot's word, they could develop and exercise taste. Though he does deplore Leavis' denigration of Eliot's later criticism, and point out that Leavis does sometimes "play the amateur theologian or sociologist to the detriment

[29]Bentley, The Importance of Scrutiny, p. 91.

of his concentration upon the strictly literary-critical side of the job," Every contends that the Christian reader of literature needs not only a sound theology but also the critical carefulness characteristic of Leavis' method.[30] And in Christian Discrimination, the book which gave Leavis the label which he affixed to the criticism of the Anglo-Catholics writing in Theology, Every asserts that he is writing in order to influence the taste of a critical minority towards conscious awareness of standards and a transcending of cultural provincialism: purposes shared by Leavis. In fact, he explicitly states his debt to F. R. Leavis and his wife in the introduction to the book: "I owe a great deal to those who have sounded a persistent alarm about the absence of standards in education, culture, and politics, in particular to Dr. and Mrs. Leavis and their friends of the Scrutiny group, who have remained sceptical about the relevance of theology to the problem, though they have never denied that the problem is in some sort a religious one."[31]

But how is taste theologically significant? C. S. Lewis, in reacting to Every's article "The Necessity of Scrutiny," holds that it is not. Salvation is not dependent in any way on literature or any other aspect of culture. He notes that the ancient Fathers were very suspicious of culture, and that even John Henry Newman declared that literature after all was only the voice of the natural, sinful man.

[30]"The Necessity of Scrutiny," Theology, XXXVIII (March 1939), 177, 183-184.

[31]London, 1940, pp. 11, viii.

At best, Lewis concludes, culture is merely preliminary and recreative.[32] Every responds to Lewis by agreeing with Leavis that the critical task is to "teach us how to read." But he denies the severe distinction which Lewis makes between the natural activities of the human soul and the supernatural realm of the human spirit; inevitably the "recreation" of the soul, the interests and moral attitudes which come to typify a man--his taste, if you will--affects the salvation of his spirit. The Church has recognized this for centuries, he continues, by making the classical liberal education the foundation upon which are built the studies of philosophy and theology. Thus he is led to remark, again invoking Leavis and his group, that "the educational program of Scrutiny seems to me to be in large part, albeit unconsciously, a return to the good traditions of the first two subjects, grammar and rhetoric, in the medieval trivium."[33]

Like many other Christian Critics, Every is concerned lest the Christian way of feeling and imagining become unintelligible to the world at large, which has rejected all supernaturalism for a world of practicality and factuality. If the world is completely secularized, he warns, Christian discrimination may be reduced to "exposing muddle and confusion and concealed irrationality, making ready new forms of

[32]"Christianity and Culture," Theology, XL (March 1940), 169-170.

[33]"In Defence of Criticism," Theology, XLI (September 1940), 162-163. This argument anticipates the defense of literature on the basis of natural theology, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

expression and communication through the spoken rather than the written word, and through music and song when speech is impossible, until the hour of resurrection come." In the meantime we have art which the Christian can view as religious rather than humanist, for it recognizes "the weakness and sinfulness of man and his need of redemption."[34] We also have various sorts of criticism at the present time, all of which are valuable for elucidating literature; but they all must include the discipline of the Leavis school. Regarding Marxist and Freudian criticism Every writes: "I do not think that such analyses are by any means useless, but I would insist that they can only be satisfactorily pursued with the aid of an accurate and detailed literary criticism." He would include the theological critic as well: "There is no reason why the Marxian, the psycho-analyst, and the theologian should not all simultaneously set to work to analyse the concealed economic motives, the neuroses, and the heresies in modern popular literature . . . provided only that none of them think that they can do their work without the aid of the trained critic, and that none expect an instant acceptance of their results. We want as many analyses as possible."[35]

Several years later, in the book Poetry and Personal Responsibility, Every connects the trend toward the secular fact with a more recent

[34]Every, Christian Discrimination, pp. 65, 47.

[35]Every, Christian Discrimination, pp. 10-11. Here Every seems to separate literary and theological criticism; but no such separation is evident in his later work, as will be seen as the investigation of it continues.

counter-tendency which to some degree accounts for the conversion of T. S. Eliot and the reaction of the artistically sensitive against secularism. Every discerns a schism between serious thinking and artistic thinking beginning during the industrial revolution, until at the opening of the twentieth century serious thinkers were reluctant to admit any imaginative element into their intellectual constructions. But the free verse of Pound and the early Eliot represented the breakdown of the scientific world picture, which had already been criticized by such men as Nietzsche, Bergson, and later Freud, all of whom held that the intellect did not give an adequate account of the world and demanded that the irrational in man be recognized. In this context Poetry, which is able to engage the irrational, became once again a serious activity rather than an aesthetic frivolity. The ability of the imagination to raise profound questions about man and society and God is apparent in the later poetry of Eliot, in which we see his pilgrimage to orthodox Christianity. In his criticism, too, we see a growing sense of tradition and the need for an "organic" society. And in his journal, The Criterion, we see an increasing concern with social issues, though with many of the contributors to the journal during the thirties social concern was expressed in Marxist terms. In Leavis we also see the concern for society, but in terms of a critical elite who would understand that man's deepest insights and feelings will be evident not in pronouncements which can be abstracted from the literary text but in the very style and form of the art. Leavis' concern for man's

values was evident even in the twenties, and in a sense he paved the way for the preoccupation with ideology that so horrified him during the following decade. But then there was a disenchantment of the intellectuals with Marxism, and following World War II there emerged a new type of criticism which was not afraid to "define the outlook of a writer in terms that go beyond the limits of literature" but which also was forced, by the complicated and condensed poetry of such men as Dylan Thomas and Charles Williams, to a close attentiveness to the specificities of poetic speech.[36]

Unfortunately, Every's theories are sometimes more seminal than his practical application of them. He is occasionally guilty, in Christian Discrimination, of some strange literary preferences. For instance, he praises Crabbe not for his literary ability but for being the last writer who assumed common values in his audience. And he lauds Charlotte M. Yonge as a "Christian novelist," a choice which elicited a very strong negative reaction from Q. D. Leavis.[37] In

[36]Every, Poetry and Personal Responsibility, pp. 74-84.

[37]She writes in a review entitled "Charlotte Yonge and 'Christian Discrimination'," that "the tendency of orthodoxy is to repress these perceptions ["the finest and keenest perceptions of an age" expressed in literature--which may not be orthodox] for its own convenience and cause a moral cramp in the developing consciousness--an effect very obvious in Charlotte Yonge's novels so that these might just be described as undesirable literature." Whereupon she quotes a scene from one of the novels which displays such cruelty in the name of piety that she concludes: "The determination of the educated that a secular school system should take children out of the clutches of the religious is understandable" (Scrutiny, XII [1943], 159).

Poetry and Personal Responsibility Every includes some penetrating essays on Graham Greene, Joyce, Charles Williams, and others; but he cannot resist the temptation to rank Kathleen Raine and Edith Sitwell with T. S. Eliot as literary explorers of orthodox Christianity.[38]

Another challenge to Lewis' anticultural bias comes from S. L. Bethell, the other major Theology critic. He charges Lewis with taking a stance perilously close to Calvinism, pointing out that the Catholic faith has always seen fit to "baptize the natural order into Christ" (distinguishing those elements worth baptizing, of course) rather than consigning it all to the devil.[39] He also, like Every, objects to the distinction by Lewis between soul and spirit, noting that literary criticism, especially since I. A. Richards, has taken psychological insights into account. With such insights in mind, Bethell contends that unconsciously held attitudes, often those characteristic of the writer's milieu or the result of his own unintellectualized assumptions, are more important than the attitudes which are explicitly articulated. These unconscious attitudes are not located in obvious preachments but in the details of style, a fact which, to his credit, F. R. Leavis recognized in his criticism.[40] Eliot's close examination of style also rests on this conviction: to Eliot form and content are seen to be identical, and therefore every change in wording is a change in meaning.

[38]Every, Poetry and Personal Responsibility, p. 73.

[39]"Christianity and Culture: Replies to Mr. Lewis," Theology, XL (May 1940), 357.

[40]The Literary Outlook (London, 1943), p. 6.

The poet does not beforehand arrange his ideas: he has only an indistinct "propulsion" which is to be realized in words; thus words, in the creative process, are not applied after thinking but are the means of thought. Poetry is, then, to be viewed as a tissue of experiences discoverable in the complex interrelations and implications of words.[41]

However, Leavis does not consistently seem to recognize, in his own preoccupation with values, that unconscious assumptions are equally important for the critics, for such assumptions are the basis of "the quality of their insight, the degree of their sensitive understanding of human experience." What is so dangerous today is the appearance of so-called "pure" critics, who flaunt their impartiality and condemn what they term critical partisanship; but in fact they themselves hold unconsciously to nineteenth-century humanism, which has become universally pervasive in academic circles. These critics are the ones who are narrowly dogmatic (in the popular sense of the word), for they lack the intellectual humility of the Christian, who must admit that all human judgments are partial and clouded because they originate from fallen man.[42]

The only salvation from narrow personal prejudices open to either the writer or the critic, Bethell maintains, is in the Church, for it provides the only tradition, the only continuity of belief. Outside

[41] Essays on Literary Criticism and the English Tradition (London, 1948), pp. 32-33.

[42] Bethell, Essays on Literary Criticism, pp. 24-25.

the Church this tradition is not available, so Bethell can conclude that "non-Christian writers, retired into their private thoughts, or attempting to live and communicate only through the unconscious, have no means of literary salvation save in accepting the orthodox stable point in a world of social flux. Extinction or conversion seem to be the simple alternatives confronting the non-Christian artist--though the problem is complicated for him by the fact that conversion for artistic reasons is no true conversion, and so will not even serve his artistic purposes." The same is true for the critic; and therefore Bethell advances the proposition that "we must have in the Church a body of really able and informed literary critics who are themselves practicing churchmen, not wholly ignorant of theology." Such critics should inaugurate their own periodical to publish new poetry and prose; they should also reassess the literature of the past on the basis of Christian principles to counter what now passes for literary history, which is "the product of a Whig and free-thinking age, dominated by the still recent success of the Romantic Movement." The new perspective would re-establish the seventeenth-century divines (Andrewes, Donne, Taylor, Barrow, South, and Stillingfleet) and reduce the influence of Hobbes. Leavis in his Revaluations has followed Eliot and reassessed poetry in the light of the raised status of the metaphysical poets; the reassessment on Christian grounds would "perhaps treat more kindly that modest central line of Christian poets and prose writers, who, with the cultural tide against them, clung to the foundations of their faith." Some of these would be Isaac Watts, Edward Young, and

Christopher Smart of the eighteenth century, and Captain Marryat and Charlotte M. Yonge of the twentieth century.[43]

Going even further, Bethell advocates that since the Christian tradition stands in opposition to the intellectual and emotional chaos of the world, Christian writers should write only for other Christians until Christian culture (along the lines of Maritain's True Humanism and Eliot's Notes Towards the Definition of Culture) be re-established. The poetry produced by such writers would probably be classic in temper, since in such writing "the intellect must order and control feeling, for the expression of attitudes not individual but social; it must have the sober tone of corporate responsibility, not the freakish moods of individual will." It would also have an element of romance, in the sense of touching on the mysterious and the intangible, for it would be "an exploration of the fringes of human experience which border on the immanent and transcendent life of God." Then, lest his conception of poetry be thought a restriction to the merely devotional, he assures us that he has in mind a poetry "dealing with every aspect of human and divine activity, but always based upon the acknowledged facts and principles of the Catholic faith."[44] The criterion for acceptability, nonetheless, is strictly limited to Catholicism (Anglican and Roman); and this extremely parochial version of a "great tradition" almost

[43]Bethell, The Literary Outlook, pp. 83-87.

[44]Bethell, The Literary Outlook, p. 101.

seems worthy of Leavis' scorn for the Theology critics. But Bethell's call for an orthodox criticism is evidence of a new level of self-consciousness and confidence that a new and valid kind of theological criticism is possible.

In his later consideration of the relationship between orthodoxy and literature, he seems less sanguine about the possibility of literature written by Catholic Christians solely for Catholic Christians; and he broadens, slightly, his view of a Christian criticism. He does deny that there is anything like a work of art in itself: a work of art inevitably is compounded of attitudes to life, experience, and the world. This means that the critic is brought face to face with the problem of belief and value. Now the Christian critic does not automatically approve the works of fellow Christians; a writer must produce well-written work or it must be dismissed. But the Christian critic will do more than pass judgment on the writer's ability to write; he will also examine whether Christianity is central or peripheral to the work, whether what appears to the writer as Christian is really something else; in short, he must examine closely "the quality of insight that is really there; for every glimpse of reality is welcome to the Christian; he has inherited the earth and those who are not against him are on his side." With regard to the non-Christian writer, he will look beneath the level of profession to see what is really there, and applaud anything of value.[45]

[45]Bethell, Essays on Literary Criticism, pp. 21-22.

Although Leavis had a special influence, historically, on the development of Christian Criticism in Great Britain, his attitudes are not untypical of several of the American New Critics. Of the original "Fugitive School," out of whose writings the New Criticism was born in the United States, I shall first discuss Allen Tate, following R. W. Stallman's placing of him as the "spokesman of the Southern school of poet-critics."[46] There is an ambivalence in Tate's writing similar to that in the criticism of F. R. Leavis--which is not surprising, since he, like Leavis, was strongly influenced by Eliot. Like Eliot in his early criticism, Tate is very concerned in his early criticism to establish the autonomy of the poem, and to establish careful reading as the valid critical strategy. Thus, for instance, there is the famous announcement in the Preface to On the Limits of Poetry that poetry is "neither religion nor social engineering."[47] As Tate says elsewhere, poetry is autotelic; the poet as poet is committed to the specificities of language and image, not to political or philosophical or religious abstractions. Thus, Tate observes, criticizing the notion that poetry must be relevant to some nonpoetic system of ideas: "Of all the arts, poetry has a medium the most complex and the least reducible to any one set of correlations, be they historical, or economic, or theological, or moral."[48]

[46]"The New Critics," Critiques and Essays in Criticism: 1920-1948, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York, 1949), p. 496.

[47]This volume was later included as part of the more comprehensive Collected Essays (Denver, 1959), where this phrase appears on p. xi.

[48]Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," Collected Essays, pp. 11-12.

Nonetheless, Tate moves away from this narrow view of poetry and criticism so that one of the more recent Christian Critics is able to say of Tate, as well as Eliot, that their "inquiries into the nature of man's life in culture have led them often to move from a consideration of aesthetic and literary problems to a consideration of religious and theological problems."[49] For Tate, as for Eliot, the central difficulty for the poet today is the lack of a living tradition; and he often contrasts the ages of orthodox Christian faith to the contemporary chaos. In "What Is a Traditional Society?" he discusses Eliot's The Waste Land as exhibiting the aimlessness of modern life; then he catches himself short, finding it necessary to apologize for a preoccupation which, he feels, does not accord with his pronouncements about what the literary critic should engage in. He calls himself not a poet or a literary critic but a moralist, and offers as a defense only a plea to the reader that he "remember that moralists these days are desperate persons, and must in their weaker moments squeeze a moral even out of modern poetry." But his continuing interest in the problem of the poet in a larger cultural context (exemplified in his essays on E. A. Robinson, Hart Crane, and Emily Dickinson) leads him to broader views of the function of criticism. In "A Note on Critical Autotelism" he defends the New Criticism in surprisingly inclusive terms:

[49]Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier (New York, 1958), p. ix.

> There can be no end to the permutations of the critical relation to literature, philosophy, and religion. The New Criticism offers to the lingering eye as many permutations as criticism in the past has offered, and probably more. Mr. Ransom, for example, has been concerned for more than ten years with the place of the work of art in the total moral and psychic experience; and in this enquiry he has been unlike any other American critic.

In the series of brief reflective queries which constitute "Is Literary Criticism Possible?" he ponders the relation of artistic truth to non-artistic, "absolute" truth:

> In certain past ages there was no distinct activity of the mind conscious of itself as literary criticism; for example, the age of Sophocles and the age of Dante. In the age of Dante the schoolmen held that poetry differed from scriptural revelation in its historia, or fable, at [sic] which, in poetry, the literal event could be part or even all fiction. But the other, higher meanings of poetry might well be true, in spite of the fictional plot, if the poet had the gift of anagogical, or spiritual, insight. Who was capable of knowing when the poet had achieved this insight? Is literary criticism possible without a criterion of absolute truth? Would a criterion of absolute truth make literary criticism as we know it unnecessary? Can it have a relevant criterion of truth without acknowledging an emergent order of truth in its great subject matter, literature itself?[50]

The growing preoccupation with ultimate implications of literature comes most to the fore in "The Man of Letters in the Modern World," which is thoroughly saturated with Christian ideas, and is surely Tate's version of Eliot's "Religion and Literature." Tate analyzes the basic sickness of the modern world as anthropological: its view of men has been debased until the individual has become an automaton.

[50]Tate, Collected Essays, pp. 301, 540, 487.

Automata in the mass are directed by communication, which has for its purpose conditioning and control. The man of letters, on the other hand, is heir to a tradition which sees man differently; therefore "he must recreate for his age the image of man, and he must propagate standards by which other men may test that image, and distinguish the false from the true." The image of man for him is two-sided. The secularists would deny man the capability of radical evil, but the man of letters perceives that man can still be lost; in fact, "there would be no hell for modern man if our men of letters were not calling attention to it." But he also sees man to be capable of radical, personalizing love-in-communion: "Perhaps it is not too grandiose a conception to suggest that works of literature, from the short lyric to the long epic, are the recurrent discovery of the human communion as experience, in a definite place and at a definite time."[51]

The anthropology which underlies the critical discrimination of man-in-communion from man-in-the-crowd Tate recognizes to be derived from a source other than literature itself. At this point Tate parallels most closely the language of Eliot's "Religion and Literature": the critical responsibility of the man of letters is "what it has always been--the recreation and the application of literary standards, which in order to be effectively literary, must be more than literary." What are these "more than literary" standards? Going further than Eliot, Tate declares them to be religious, for the essence of true

[51]Tate, Collected Essays, pp. 379, 384, 388.

communication, in which the artist is intimately implicated, is communion through love. But love is not a matter of conscious decision; a man "loves his neighbor, as well as the man he has never seen, only through the love of God. 'He that saith that he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.'" Tate has here broken new ground. It would have been helpful if he had clarified some of his ideas. Does he mean, for instance, to recall the theory of Tolstoy's "What Is Art?" that its function is to transmit feelings of human brotherhood? It is clear, however, that Tate has moved substantially beyond the earlier notion of poetry as autotelic. The close of the essay at first glance would appear to be a reiteration of Arnold's call for the preservation of "Culture," but Tate appeals to supernatural sanctions and concludes on a definitely Christian note:

> The true province of the man of letters is nothing less (as it is nothing more) than culture itself. The state is the mere operation of society, but culture is the way society lives, the material medium through which men receive the one lost truth which must be perpetually recovered: the truth of what Jacques Maritain calls the "supra-temporal destiny" of man. It is the duty of the man of letters to supervise the culture of language, to which the rest of culture is subordinate, and to warn us when our language is ceasing to forward the ends proper to man. The end of social man is communion in time through love, which is beyond time.[52]

[52]Tate, Collected Essays, pp. 390, 386, 392-393.

The criticism of Cleanth Brooks follows a developmental pattern closely similar to that in Tate's work. As with Tate, Brooks' early essays are largely practical criticism, close reading of poetry to show the superiority of the metaphysical style of paradox and indirection over the thinner poetry of abstract ideology. He severely attacks Yvor Winters, for example, because Winters passes moral judgment on "rational" truth which he abstracts from poetry--a practice which in the end treats the poem as a statement of the poet's beliefs rather than a dramatic presentation of the complexities of experience which stands independent of the poet.[53] Like the other New Critics, Brooks is attempting to reestablish the validity of metaphorical truth, which embodies the richness and contrariety of life, in the face of the modern scientistic tendency to see only generalized and rationalized statements as cognitive. But "metaphorical" is another designation for what other writers call "mythic," and here Brooks is right on the edge of moving from strict explication of poetry to the realm of religion and metaphysics: a movement which he disparages in Arnold and the early Richards. In a lecture delivered at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, he acknowledges, though he does not expatiate on, the relationship of poetry to myth. He defends "the great myths" against the charge that they are mere fairy tales, noting that John Crowe Ransom

[53]"Criticism, History, and Critical Relativism," The Well Wrought Urn (New York, 1947), pp. 215-219.

referred to myths as "great radical metaphors" and arguing that, like metaphors in poetry, they "embody unique insights and are inexhaustible, not susceptible to being reduced to paraphrase."[54] The essay "Christianity, Myth, and the Symbolism of Poetry" is more specific about the relation of poetic and religious language. Both involve myth; but ultimately poetry, unlike religion, is intended to be fictive:

> Literature and religion are indeed close together in their areas of interest. Both use symbols, symbols of a kind quite different from those employed by the physicist or the mathematician, being value-structured, "mythic," and in some way keyed to human response. But they have differences, too, and those differences are important ones. Literature always involves an as-if. The literary mode is par excellence that in which we learn what it feels like to be in a certain situation . . . . But religion always involves, it seems to me, some kind of commitment, something deeper than any as-if.[55]

But in The Hidden God, based on lectures given in 1955 at the Conference in Theology for College Faculty, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, the approach is frankly Christian. I do not know whether Brooks would call his criticism here literary or something else, but

[54]"Metaphor and the Function of Criticism," Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. Stanley R. Hopper (New York, 1952), pp. 134-135. I might add that the mythic nature of religion and poetry is thematic in the work of John Crowe Ransom as early as God Without Thunder (New York, 1930). But I am not aware that he indulges in explicitly theological criticism in the manner practiced by Tate and Brooks.

[55]Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, ed. Finley Eversole (New York, 1962), p. 105.

the lectures combine theological themes with themes from his literary criticism. They are addressed to Christians as readers of modern literature, but they will deal both with writers who profess Christianity and with those who do not. He warns his audience that the Christian is to pay close attention to work by both types of authors. The non-Christians, for their part, are producing "some of the most spiritually nourishing literature of our time." The committed writers, for their part, are to be approached as artists, not purveyors of "overt preachments," for it is only the element of art that separates what they write from the religious tract.[56]

The "problem of Christian literature" is twofold. First, there is the question of a viable myth as a framework for the modern writer, since he lives in a world where all myth is doubted. Brooks considers Yeats' "Search for a New Myth" but comments on the fact that although Christianity was finally rejected as an "exploded" and impossible option for Yeats, Yeats did take Christianity seriously as part of his universal system and as a valid protest against modern secularism. Brooks also reiterates his long-standing emphasis on the ironic and paradoxical nature of poetry by discussing the necessity for T. S. Eliot to present the Christian myth to a non-Christian audience indirectly:

> Eliot has constantly and consciously addressed his poetry to the gentiles, and as a consequence has been forced to be not direct but indirect, since he could never assume agreement on principles or unanimity in doctrine . . . . With regard to the apprehension of

[56]New Haven, 1963, p. 5.

> the eternal, all of us, even the professing Christians, are gentiles. We cannot see directly and face to face. We must use symbols and analogies. Eliot quite properly refuses to "overleap" and "cheat" the "conditions of man." Man is not an angelic intelligence, a pure spirit. He is an embodied soul. Yet that body was created by God as was the world itself. God's purpose can be discerned in that world, and his glory can be shown forth through the creatures of that world.[57]

The second problem is anthropological; like Tate, Brooks sees a major task of literature to be resistance of dehumanizing behaviorism and the reduction of the individual to a part of a manipulated mass perfectible by sociological means. He discusses Hemingway, Faulkner, Eliot, and Robert Penn Warren in terms of their attempts at reasserting a more or less classical view of man.[58] Hemingway's man affirms a stoical courage in the face of a meaningless universe; Faulkner, Eliot, and Warren insist on the ambiguity of human character, on the Hulmean emphasis on original sin, which is at least a partial recollection of the Christian doctrine. But Brooks is at pains always to spell out the relationship of the artists' visions to Christianity. Their anthropologies are seen in the light of the theologian Paul Tillich's

[57]Brooks, The Hidden God, p. 97.

[58]Similar interest in anthropology, or the doctrine of man, is evident in Norman Nicholson's Man and Literature (London, 1943), Randall Stewart's American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge, La., 1958), Roland M. Frye's Perspective on Man: Literature and the Christian Tradition (Philadelphia, 1961), and in two books by Edmund Fuller, Man in Modern Fiction (New York, 1958) and Books with Men Behind Them (New York, 1962). These critics protest, like Brooks, against the notion in much modern literature that man is perfectible and they uphold the traditional Christian view that man is imperfect and sinful, needing redemption.

recognition that in modern culture there is "an increasingly powerful protest against the spirit of industrialism" which produces emptiness and meaninglessness.[59] The emphasis of Hemingway and Faulkner on courage is regarded by Brooks as "significant and perhaps necessary as a first step in moving back toward the Christian witness." However, as we have seen in the lecture on Eliot, Brooks is not trying to make Christians out of all modern poets. The approach of these artists to Christianity is often only proximate: the artist is primarily committed to the complexity of experience, but even this may be salutary: "Dedication to his art . . . would not necessarily bring the artist to Christianity. It would be foolish to claim that. But dedication to his art may well protect the artist from some of the deceptions endemic to our time. On the positive side, dedication to his art will probably help him at least to see the problems of the human spirit to which Christianity--and any other serious philosophy--addresses itself." Nor is the Christian to come to modern literature merely to be edified. What the Christian may "get out of" his reading is an increased awareness of the world: "If one of the functions of literature is to help us to fix our eyes otherwhere, another important function and perhaps a Primary function is to let us see where we actually do fix our eyes--to reveal the predicament in which we gaze idly at nothing except that which is just beyond our noses and merely beneath our feet."[60] Thus

[59]From Tillich's Theology of Culture, ed. Robert Kimball (New York, 1959); quoted on p. 7 of The Hidden God.

[60]Brooks, The Hidden God, pp. 15, 99, 132.

Brooks has been able skillfully to join a specifically Christian vision with the broadly humanistic breadth which is found in the New Critics characteristically.

The Theological Milieu of Christian Criticism

Earlier I mentioned the importance of theological milieu for the development of Christian Criticism. The predominant school among literary critics, as we have seen, is the New Criticism. It would be difficult to prove that the New Critics were directly influenced by modern theology in the "Fugitive" period. Nevertheless, it is at least coincidental that theology in the first half of the century was involved with several of the same problems that engaged the literary critics. Like Hulme, some early twentieth-century theologians assume: (1) discontinuity between the natural and the supernatural, and (2) original sin as basic to the human make-up. They are reacting against nineteenth-century romanticism, which was monistic and optimistic about man. Hulme is specifically opposed to Bergson, for whom the basic reality is the dynamic, creative, evolutionary élan vital or life-force, which is striving to overcome the inertia of static matter. This may seem like dualism, but actually "matter itself is a kind of by-product of the vital impetus. This creative life-force is the God of Bergson's philosophy."[61] In Speculations Hulme counters with a

[61] John Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology, 1900-1960 (New York, 1963), pp. 171-172.

forthright dualism: "It is necessary to realize that there is an absolute, and not a relative, difference between humanism (which we can take to be the highest expression of the vital), and the religious spirit. The divine is not life at its intensest. It contains in a way an almost anti-vital element . . . ." Bergson also stresses spontaneous intuitive apprehension of the ideal life and love to which the life-force is pressing. Hulme would label this the merest romantic humanism, again holding to a strict dualism which sees religious perfection as absolutely distinct from human sinfulness: "What is important, is what nobody seems to realize--the dogmas like that of Original Sin, which are the closest expression of the categories of the religious attitude. That man is in no sense perfect, but a wretched creature, who can yet apprehend perfection. It is not, then, that I put up with the dogma for the sake of the sentiment, but that I may possibly swallow the sentiment for the sake of the dogma . . . . Certainly no humanist could understand the dogma. They all chatter about matters which are in comparison with this, quite secondary notions--God, Freedom, and Immortality."[62]

[62]Speculations, ed. Herbert Read, 2nd ed. (London, 1936), pp. 8, 71. First published in 1924. Hulme attaches several sets of labels to this pair of opposing attitudes. He terms the view of which he disapproves "romanticism" or "humanism," and his own view he calls "classical" or, as the passages cited demonstrate, "religious." He associates such names as Pelagius and Rousseau with the former, and such names as St. Augustine, Aquinas, and Pascal with the latter. Especially Pascal: in the section of Speculations entitled "Humanism and the Religious Attitude" he claims that "everything that I shall say later in these notes is to be regarded merely as a prologomena to the reading of Pascal . . ." (pp. 56-57). Of course we know that Hulme's adherence to the "religious" or "classical"

Similarly, there were theologians who reacted against the religious optimism and evolutionism which held sway in Europe and the United States before World War I. John Macquarrie describes the philosophical-theological scene as follows: "Generally speaking, we have found optimism, whether it rested on the perfection of the Absolute and the kinship of the world with the human spirit, or on the confidence inspired by the power of science and the belief in the perfectibility of mankind through scientific enlightenment."[63] The two most influential continental theologians of the latter nineteenth century, Albrecht Ritschl and Ernst Troeltsch, were both firmly in the optimistic tradition. For Ritschl theology was primarily a matter of ethical advancement: faith affirms that there are "transcendental spiritual powers" which aid man to "thrust back the otherwise annihilating forces of Nature." In other words, "God is the needed prop of ethical aspiration, the trustee of our moral interests." Troeltsch, the leading light of the school which concentrated on studying the history and development of the world's religions (Religionsgeschichte), saw Christianity in the context of a

---

position resulted in definite aesthetic pronouncements: he predicted a decline in artistic concern with human feeling and form, and a new interest in abstract, geometric, even mechanical forms which would subordinate the organic and vital. That this position leads him to conclusions about aesthetics is perhaps the exception rather than the rule in the tradition to which Hulme allies himself. St. Augustine, for example, and Pascal, as well as their modern disciples whom we shall encounter in this discussion--such figures as the theologian Karl Barth and the critic W. H. Auden--tend to have a negative opinion of man's culture in general and of his art in particular, as inventions of a depraved creature and therefore possessing minimal religious value.

[63] Macquarrie, p. 116.

universal Spirit operating in history, "Spirit that has issued from its transcendent origin, that is striving on and up through all kinds of human error and failure, that in uniform and rational development is conquering by degrees the limitations and hindrances inseparable from bondage to nature, and is gradually rising by the native powers of immanent purpose to its absolute completion." Furthermore, the law of continuity is central to Troeltsch: there is in no sense an "absolute" which can be separated from history, for "all events are woven into the same web and are of the same general pattern, all are explicable by immanent forces, all are such that an exhaustive interpretation of their emergence can be undertaken with good hopes of success."[64]

Ritschl and Troeltsch, and a host of lesser thinkers in the English-speaking world, set the tone of idealism and optimism in theology before World War I. After World War I the pessimism and dualism which we have seen to be major motifs in Hulme came to be major themes in European theology as well. Theology in the United States remained optimistic through the 1930's, for American theology has traditionally displayed a "cultural lag," picking up European theology about a generation later; besides, the effects of the war and even the depression were less severe in America--but the change came nevertheless.

The watershed which separated the old from the new theology was the publication in 1919 of a commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the

[64]Hugh Ross Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth (New York, 1937), pp. 150-151, 191.

Romans by a young rural pastor in Germany, Karl Barth. Barth goes entirely against the idealistic-optimistic direction of nineteenth-century theology, and appeals instead to Søren Kierkegaard and to the Protestant Reformers Luther and Calvin. Any notion of human-divine continuity is strenuously and repeatedly denied by Barth, for the world of time is radically separated from the eternal, ontologically and morally. "Every concrete and tangible thing belongs within the order of time," he writes. And "everything which emerges in men and which owes its form and expansion to them is always and everywhere, and as such, ungodly and unclean." In more biblical terms, he adds that "the kingdom of men is, without exception, never the Kingdom of God: and since there are no men so fortunate as to be incumbents in the Kingdom of God, no man can exonerate or excuse himself." In fact, any notion at all of the immanence of God is foolish:

> Incomprehensible and meaningless is all confusing of time and eternity, every intrusion into the world or appearance in it of the sovereignty of God as a concrete tangible thing--and we must include here every 'substratum of divinity', every 'higher world': unintelligible and meaningless is all other-worldliness, all improper notions of immanence, every non-radical idea of transcendence, every kind of relative relation between God and man, every divinity which presents itself as being or having or doing what men are or have or do, every human figure which calls itself in any way divine. When all this middle-realm between God and man is clearly recognized, it must be discarded.

The attempt to deny the gap between infinity and finitude, or to bridge it from man's side, is not only futile but sinful, for Barth defines sin as "a robbing of God" which reveals itself in our "drunken

blurring of the distance which separates us from God; in our forgetfulness of His invisibility; in our investing of men with the form of God and of God with the form of man; and in our devotion to some romantic infinity, some 'No-God' of this world, which we have created for ourselves."[65]

Now Barth, unlike Hulme, does not stop here. Hulme's "dogmatism" has to do only with discontinuity and original sin; the only way out of the human dilemma seems to be some sort of stoical discipline. With Barth, on the other hand, the discussion about discontinuity and an unromantic view of man are preparatory to the proclamation of the gift of salvation from God to man from the "other side," in Jesus Christ. Still, Barth did alter the emphasis of theology by recalling the Kierkegaardian view of human nature, and focusing attention on man's lostness.

It is only fair to note that The Epistle to the Romans exhibits a harshness of tone that Barth's later work seems to lack. The Humanity of God, a lecture delivered in 1956 and later published, does show a decided softening of attitude and a desire to complement his former position with an emphasis on the meeting of God and man in Jesus Christ. He is able now to look back to his early work as partial, admitting that he too zealously attempted to "clear away," with a derisive laugh, all that he suspected to be tinged with mysticism, romanticism, and idealism.[66] But this does not diminish the influence

[65]Der Römerbrief. The sixth edition was translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns as The Epistle to the Romans (London, 1933). These references are to pp. 56, 108, 167-168 of the English translation.

[66]Richmond, Va., 1960, p. 43.

that the Barthian theology of the post World War I period had against the earlier theology, an influence in Protestant thought which parallels the influence of Hulme in literary criticism.

If Karl Barth brought about the collapse of the older theology in Europe, the optimistic feeling which prevailed a generation longer in the United States was similarly challenged by Reinhold Niebuhr, who was much influenced by Barth yet was distinctly American in his approach, which was socially rather than systematically or dogmatically oriented. In several respects the ideas of Niebuhr, like those of Barth, resemble the ideas of Hulme. Both men are critical of the modern trust in science and progress, because it presupposes an overly confident notion of human achievement. Deplorably, wrote Hulme, "all thought since the Renaissance, in spite of its apparent variety, forms one coherent whole . . . . It all rests on the same conception of the nature of man and all exhibits the same inability to recognize the meaning of the dogma of original sin. In this period not only have its philosophy, its literature and its ethics been based upon this new conception of man as fundamentally good, as sufficient, as the measure of things; but a good case can be made out for regarding many of its characteristic economic features as springing entirely from this central abstract conception."[67] Niebuhr quotes this very passage as an introduction to

[67]Hulme, Speculations, pp. 51-52.

a chapter on "The Easy Conscience of Modern Man" in The Nature and Destiny of Man.[68] He sees this as a dangerous deviation from the more realistic Christian anthropology which, in the myth of the Fall, recognizes a less attractive side to human nature. This is the great weakness of modern "liberal Christianity," with its superficial acquiescence to commercialism and its complacent optimism.[69] His writings in the 1930's and 1940's made for a re-evaluation of the older American liberal view of man and society; the more mysterious complexities of human nature were once again noticed, instead of being shunted aside as old fashioned. At least one of the contemporary Christian Critics, who has explored the range of human possibility in modern literature, acknowledges his direct influence: Nathan A. Scott, Jr. dedicates his volume of theoretical criticism "to Reinhold Niebuhr: From whom I learned my first lessons in detecting the religious frontiers of contemporary culture--Whose classroom was for me the place of the first Great Awakening."[70]

We have seen how the predominant theological trend of post World War I Protestant theology, by rejecting the old romantic optimism and by making a sharp distinction between religion and culture, parallels the thrust of the New Criticism. The stress on original sin in both Hulme and Barth was valuable for Christian Critics, for it enabled them to perceive new depths of human personality and thus be better equipped

[68]New York, 1941, I, 93.

[69]An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York, 1935), pp. 14-15.

[70]Scott, Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier, p. v.

to deal with the complex, haunted, lost, and demonic characters typical of modern literature. But the notion of discontinuity long precluded serious consideration of creative literature by the theologically minded: literature was an expression of sinful man and, like all his other cultural achievements, was found wanting under the judgment of God. Probably the strongest advocate of this position is W. H. Auden, whose poetry (ironically enough) seems to belie his theoretical denial that "Christian" art is possible. Reflecting the idea (which we have already seen in Barth) that the sacred and the secular are completely disjunctive realms, Auden asserts that "to a Christian, unfortunately, both art and science are secular activities, that is to say, small beer." The artistic imagination is purely natural: "The imagination is a natural human faculty and therefore retains the same character whatever a man believes. The only difference can be in the way that he interprets its data. At all times and in all places, certain objects, beings and events arouse in his imagination a feeling of sacred awe, while other objects, beings and events leave his imagination unmoved." But to say that "at all times and in all places, certain objects, beings and events arouse in his imagination a feeling of sacred awe" is, according to Auden, to lean towards Pantheism. For the Christian the truly sacred is not that which naturally arouses awe in the human imagination, but the Christ, who comes "in the form of a Servant who cannot be recognized by the eye of flesh and blood, but only by the eye of faith."[71]

[71] The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays (New York, 1962), pp. 456-457.

Behind these seemingly facile remarks is Auden's deep acquaintance with Kierkegaard's view of the aesthetic as only the first preliminary stage, surpassed by both the ethical and the religious; each stage is preparatory to the next but transcended only by a leap of faith--there is no evolution from one to the other. Pantheism and the natural worship of the imagination imply "an immediate continuity with nature and feeling before any moral distinctions are attempted." But for any moral development to occur, one must cease to float through life attempting to be morally unengaged. One must pass on to moral effort; and finally, realizing that the ideal demands of ethics cannot be met, one must experience the "new life" of faith in personal confrontation with the Eternal.[72]

At this point it might seem curious that Christian Criticism managed to spring up in a theological soil so hostile to human culture. The truth is that there have been theological currents in the twentieth century more amenable to culture, the most important of which is the "theology of culture" in the writings of Paul Tillich. Though Tillich has been classed as an existentialist, and was, early in his career, thought of as "Neo-Orthodox" along with Karl Barth, one of the major emphases of his outlook is an openness to culture as theologically significant. He does not, like the theologians who follow Thomas Aquinas, deal with culture by calling it a kind of "natural" revelation.

[72]David E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief (New York, 1957), pp. 67, 69-71.

Instead, he attempts a correlation between the questions posed by man's existential situation, expressed in his cultural creations, and the answers of the Christian message. "In using the method of correlation," Tillich explains, "systematic theology proceeds in the following way: it makes an analysis of the human situation out of which the existential questions arise, and it demonstrates that the symbols used in the Christian message are the answers to these questions." Thus the study of all aspects of man's cultural life is validated for the theologian, including the examination of his art: "The analysis of the human situation employs materials made available by man's creative self-interpretation in all realms of culture. Philosophy contributes, but so do poetry, drama, the novel, therapeutic psychology, and sociology. The theologian organizes these materials in relation to the answer given by the Christian message."[73] Such an analysis is appropriate because for Tillich culture itself is religious: it has a dimension of "depth"; it is an expression of the human spirit in terms of "ultimate concern," which is what religion is.[74] There is a close relationship, then, between religion and culture

[73]Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 62-63.

[74]It follows that for Tillich nothing is non-religious: "What does the metaphor depth mean? It means that the religious aspect points to that which is ultimate, infinite, unconditional in man's spiritual life. Religion, in the largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern. And ultimate concern is manifest in all creative functions of the human spirit . . . . Ultimate concern is manifest in the aesthetic function of the human spirit as the infinite desire to express ultimate meaning. Therefore, if anyone rejects religion in the name of the aesthetic function of the human spirit, he rejects religion in the name of religion. You cannot reject religion with ultimate seriousness, because ultimate seriousness, or the state of being ultimately concerned, is itself religion" (Theology of Culture, pp. 7-8).

which cannot be broken even if "religion" claims to be hostile to "culture" or vice versa; for "Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses itself. In abbreviation: religion is the substance of culture, culture is the form of religion."[75]

Also open to theologizing about art is the movement sometimes called Neo-Thomism. Scholasticism was revived in Italy and France in the nineteenth century, and was especially recommended to the Roman Catholic Church by Pope Leo XIII in the encyclical Aeterni Patris (1879). As a movement it began to gain ground after World War I, and "by mid-century it had fully emerged as an intellectual force of the first magnitude."[76] Neo-Thomism made available once more the emphasis on natural revelation and the doctrine of analogy--ideas which have provided major themes for the Christian Critics. One of the primary concerns of the Neo-Thomists has been to reconcile the world of the natural and the world of the supernatural. An institute for Neo-Thomistic studies was established early in the century at the University of Louvain, Belgium, by Cardinal Mercier, who was a leading spokesman for the philosophy.[77] Macquarrie

[75]Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 42.

[76]Macquarrie, Twentieth-Century Religious Thought, p. 279.

[77]See Désiré Mercier, A Manual of Modern Scholastic Philosophy, trans. T. L. Parker and S. A. Parker (London, 1926), II, 487 for a history of the Institute.

notes that "Mercier's close adherence to St Thomas is evident in his natural theology, where, rejecting St Anselm's ontological argument for God's existence, he relies on the a posteriori proofs of St Thomas. Rational philosophy thus provides a firm basis for religion and the superstructure of revelation. If indeed reason should sometimes come into conflict with revealed truth, then we must trace back our argument and look for the flaw. But an ultimate clash between the two is unthinkable!"[78] Jacques Maritain, who has become unquestionably the most prominent of the Neo-Thomists, delineates three degrees of knowledge, each proper in its own sphere but all forming a grand synthesis: scientific knowledge, metaphysical knowledge, and suprarational (mystical) knowledge.[79] Elsewhere he goes beyond the rather skimpy references to art in St. Thomas to construct a full-fledged Neo-Scholastic philosophy of art. He has thus emerged as the leading Roman Catholic theoretician of art in the twentieth century. Anglicans of Catholic bent have also been influenced by Neo-Thomism. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that Theology, the organ of the school of "Christian Discrimination," was a conservative "high church" journal; these critics were, as heirs of the Oxford Movement, more at home in the atmosphere of Roman Catholic thought than with Biblicist Protestantism. The two leading Anglican Thomists, Austin Farrer and E. L. Mascall, have written several books which deal with the relation of the natural to the supernatural, with

[78] Macquarrie, p. 281.

[79] The Degrees of Knowledge, trans. Bernard Wall and Margot R. Adamson (London, 1937).

the doctrine of analogia entis, and with the meaning of image (the image of God in Christ, biblical typology and imagery) for theology and for poetry.

Likewise growing out of renewed Catholic intellectual ferment is the recognition that art is sacramental and incarnational. T. S. K. Scott-Craig, writing on "Christianity and Poetry," touches all these themes when he recalls that "because of the analogy between things natural and supernatural, because of the poetic character of reality, Christ was able to bring sacramental worship to His people. More than once during the course of His ministry Christ took ordinary food and drink--bread, wine, fish (basic nourishment of the common folk)--and used them as effective symbols of the Divine Reality which was drawing near in Him, the Kingdom come and to come."[80] Sacramental theology and speculation on natural religion have been perennial emphases in Anglican thought ever since the seventeenth-century Caroline Divines.[81] It was the Tractarian Movement, however, which sparked new interest in these areas, an interest which has been considerable to this day.

Anglicanism shares many of these concerns with Roman Catholicism, of course, but what has often been seen to be peculiarly Anglican is the weight put on the Incarnation in modern theology. Archbishop Ramsey is thus able to say that "it is almost a commonplace that a theology of

[80] Theology, XLI (July 1940), 29-30.

[81] See extensive documentation of this in Anglicanism, ed. Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross (London, 1957).

Incarnation prevailed in Anglican divinity from the last decade of the reign of Queen Victoria until well into the new century." This is due, he points out, at least partially to the influence of those theologians who published in a volume of essays entitled Lux Mundi (1889). These men were latter-day Tractarians, and thus they retained "the sense of the moral significance of every Christian dogma, the feeling for the mysterious in religion and for the unity of sacrament and Incarnation." But they were also interested in making the faith relevant to the contemporary mind, so they described their aim in the preface as "to put the Catholic faith in its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems." Their incarnationalism thus became a way to see spiritual significance in the world: "He who became Incarnate is the Logos who has been at work in the whole created world, in nature and in man, in art and in science, in culture and in progress . . . ."[82] In the tradition of Lux Mundi is William Temple's important masterpiece, Nature, Man and God, dealing with the relationship between what we call the world, and God. Temple holds that the world is a series of strata from matter to human spirit to the ultimate Reality, which is God. It follows that the entire universe is revelatory:

> Either all occurrences are in some degree revelation of God, or else there is no such revelation at all; for the conditions of the possibility of any revelation require that there should be nothing which is not revelation. Only if God is revealed in the rising of the sun in the sky can He be revealed in

[82]Arthur Michael Ramsey, An Era in Anglican Theology: From Gore to Temple (New York, 1960), pp. 16, 2-3.

> the rising of a son of man from the dead; only if He is revealed in the history of Syrians and Philistines can He be revealed in the history of Israel; only if he chooses all men for His own can He choose any at all; only if nothing is profane can anything be sacred.

One inference Temple draws from this is that the world is sacramental. Referring to the passage just cited, he asserts that "the world, which is the self-expressive utterance of the Divine Word, becomes itself a true revelation, in which . . . what comes is not truth concerning God, but God Himself."[83] Such a universalized sacramentalism lies behind much Christian Criticism.

Also central for recent Christian Criticism is the study of image and metaphor, as we noted in the discussion of the New Critics. In holding that poetry is basically metaphoric, the New Critics were attempting to establish poetry as a viable means of human discourse against the philosophers of the logical positivist camp like Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, or Ludwig Wittgenstein, who looked at empirically verifiable scientific language as alone having meaning, dismissing poetry as meaningless or merely subjective and emotive. The New Critics, most of whom were theological conservatives, were also concerned to establish poetry's independence from religion, which is revealed. But since the logical positivists usually dismissed religion along with poetry, it was difficult to defend one without the other; this is evident in the writings of those who have asserted the significance of non-scientific

[83]London, 1940, pp. 306, 493.

language: philosophers like Ernst Cassirer or Mercea Eliade or Susanne Langer, critics like Philip Wheelwright, and theologians like Reinhold Niebuhr or Paul Tillich.

The treatment of image and symbol is hardly to be separated from the treatment of myth, which has grown out of the cultural anthropologists' research into the significance of ritual and magic, the Freudian study of dream-symbolism, and the Jungian investigation of archetypes. Biblical studies as well as literary criticism have utilized the concept of myth; so it is not surprising that some contemporary Christian Criticism is in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RELATIONSHIP OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH TO ARTISTIC TRUTH

Natural Theology and Christian Criticism

Once it is decided (1) that art is worthy of consideration as something more than the sinful product of a depraved race, and (2) that art is not interchangeable with religion, the Christian who would deal with art must establish what is for him a satisfactory relationship between faith and art. Since Christianity and art both make "truth claims," in what way is the Christian, who is committed primarily to the truth of his faith, going to find legitimate truth residing in art? Most Christian Critics avowedly or implicitly draw on the tradition of natural theology, and view art as "natural" truth. Some recent theology, however, collapses the ancient category of the supernatural into the natural, and to Tillich and his followers such theological dualism is simply irrelevant.

Natural theology has had a checkered career in the twentieth century. For Roman Catholics its importance was asserted by the First Vatican Council in 1870, which proclaimed that "Holy Mother Church holds and teaches that God . . . may certainly be known by the natural

light of human reason, by means of created things."[1] This is a re-affirmation of the Thomistic synthesis of the natural and the super-natural, a scheme which provides for the investigation of the natural along Aristotelian lines.

Not explicitly labelled natural theology but finding its sanction in the Neo-Thomist system is the work of Jacques Maritain, the foremost modern Roman Catholic aesthetician. Maritain declares, following the Schoolmen, that art "is what Aristotle called an ἕξις, in Latin a habitus, an inner quality or stable and deep-rooted disposition that raises the human subject and his natural powers to a higher degree of vital information and energy." Art is not a theological or moral virtue but "a virtue of the practical intellect--that particular virtue of the practical intellect which deals with the creation of objects to be made."[2] It is not a moral virtue because morality has to do with man's free will and action whereas art has to do with the making of a work.

Maritain also writes of poetry and theology, making a distinction between art and poetry: "By Art I mean the creative or producing, work-making activity of the human mind. By Poetry I mean, not the particular art which consists in writing verses, but a process both

[1]Quoted in David Cairns, "Natural Theology," A Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, Living Age Books (New York, 1958), p. 251.

[2]Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry (New York, 1953), pp. 48-49.

more general and more primary: that intercommunication between the inner being of things and the inner being of the human Self which is a kind of divination (as was realized in ancient times; the Latin vates was both a poet and a diviner). Poetry, in this sense, is the secret life of each and all of the arts." The key to poetry, in Maritain's sense, is creative intuition, which is "an obscure grasping of [the poet's] own Self and of things in a knowledge through union or through connaturality which is born in the spiritual unconscious, and which fructifies only in the work." Creative intuition is a function of what Aquinas called the "Illuminating Intellect . . . an inherent part of each individual's soul and intellectual structure, an inner spiritual light which is a participation in the uncreated divine light, but which is in every man, through its pure spirituality ceaselessly in act, the primal quickening source of all his intellectual activity."[3]

Does this line of thinking lead Maritain to the Crocean conclusion that religion, as well as art, is the product of the imagination? On the contrary, he takes every pain to emphasize that art and poetry have to do with nature rather than grace. Regarding artistic inspiration, he writes: "There exists a real inspiration, coming not from the Muses, but from the living God, a special movement of the natural order, by which the first intelligence, when it pleases, gives the artist a creative movement superior to the yardstick of reason, and which uses,

[3]Maritain, Creative Intuition, pp. 3, 115, 97.

in superrelevating them, all the rational energies of art; and whose impulse, moreover, man is free to follow or to vitiate."[4] He also warns against the romantic tendency to claim that poetry seizes the absolute: "Poetry (like metaphysics) is spiritual nourishment; but of a savor which has been created and which is insufficient. There is but one eternal nourishment. Unhappy you who think yourselves ambitious, and who whet your appetites for anything less than the three Divine Persons and the humanity of Christ."[5]

Theology, then, stands in a twofold relationship to art and poetry: on the one hand, it must warn them of their limitations; on the other hand, it must reassure them of their ultimately divine origin: "By showing us where moral truth and the genuine supernatural are situate, religion saves poetry from the absurdity of believing itself destined to transform ethics and life, saves it from overweening arrogance. But in teaching man the discernment of immaterial realities and the savor of the spirit, in linking poetry and art itself to God, it protects them against cowardice and self-abandonment, enables them to attain a higher and more rigorous idea of their essential spirituality, and to concentrate

[4]"Art and Scholasticism," Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry, trans. Joseph W. Evans (New York, 1962), p. 66.

[5]Maritain, "The Frontiers of Poetry," Art and Scholasticism, p. 132.

their inventive activity at the fine point thereof."[6]

Several other Roman Catholics writing on the relation of religion and art also use the idea of the "natural" in the Thomistic sense, but none of them, so far as I know, can keep entirely clear of the temptation to bring the criteria of supernatural revelation to bear on literature in such a way that literature loses the natural integrity which Maritain is so careful to maintain. Harold C. Gardiner, S. J., for many years literary critic for the Jesuit weekly America, often displays the extreme occasionalism of the periodical writer, as well as a narrow sectarianism which, unhappily, is characteristic of many of the older Roman Catholic critics. He does, though, advance the interesting notion that some fiction deals with the "natural" virtues of faith, hope, and charity.[7] Natural hope is "an anticipation of good for ourselves and for others."[8] It is related to natural faith

[6]Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, p. 139. The clear separation of art and poetry from grace leads Amos N. Wilder to place Maritain with W. H. Auden (Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition [New York, 1952], pp. 11-12). But nowhere does Maritain share Auden's attitude that poetry is for the Christian "small beer." Indeed, as Nathan Scott points out, Maritain's attitude is very similar to that of the New Critics ("Maritain in His Role as Aesthetician," The Review of Metaphysics, VIII [March 1955], 480-492).

[7]Cf. Maritain's remark that the aesthetic virtues (of humility and integrity) imitate the virtues of man as man and are analogous to the Gospel virtues (The Responsibility of the Artist [New York, 1960], pp. 99-100).

[8]Norms for the Novel (New York, 1953), p. 99.

because "if a character in a story engages in the struggle which manifests the fact that he hopes, he does it because he has a certain amount of faith in himself, a certain amount of trust and self-confidence. The reader likewise will conceive a certain amount of trust in the character." In the works of the writers Gardiner admires and calls "idealistic realists" (those he cites are Roman Catholics), there is the further implication that "they inevitably lay the ground for the operation of the virtue of natural charity." Natural charity is present when "the author sees as he writes that the moral world and the supernatural world are things to be loved and as we read we are likely to catch a glimpse of the same truth." It will also be present in the author's attitude to his characters, who will be "human beings who may be weak and variable, stubborn in their attachment to evil or quick to shake it off, but still possessed of that dignity that crowns them by the fact that they are human beings--in other words, by the fact that they are objects, worthy, at least potentially, of love."[9] Now the author may not be conscious of the implicitly religious dimensions of his writing, but this fact does not mitigate against the fundamental religiousness of his art. For in addition to the conscious purpose the author has in mind (the finis operantis), there is "an intrinsic finality, a goal inherent in the work itself (finis operis), and this will be operative

[9]Gardiner, Norms for the Novel, pp. 104-106, 109-110.

whether the author thinks of it or intends it or not." This second sort of purpose is present because art, imitating the actions of men, is inevitably concerned with the moral atmosphere which, in the widest sense, "envelopes man in his relationship to God."[10] Regretably, Gardiner's practice is not always as subtle as his theory, for his practical criticism too often expends itself railing against the evil "naturalists" among twentieth-century writers, and even descends to a defense of Roman Catholic censorship.[11]

[10]Gardiner, Norms for the Novel, pp. 138-139.

[11]Fifty Years of the American Novel, 1900-1950: A Christian Appraisal (New York, 1951), and In All Conscience: Reflections on Books and Culture (Garden City, New York, 1959).

Compare the statements of two other Roman Catholic critics about the relationship of art to morality. Arthur Little, S.J. in The Nature of Art (New York, 1946), perceives that the effect of art brings it into the realm of morality: "Now the proof that the exercise of significant art is by its nature an action of the moral order is based on its natural purpose of exciting emotion. For emotion is always an attraction to the fulfilment of a natural craving. It must therefore of its nature either promote or menace the fulfilment of man's function as a man . . . . it is certain that many emotions excite natural cravings for actions which, though good or morally indifferent in themselves, can be morally evil by excess" (p. 204). A few pages later, he advances a more sophisticated argument from the presupposition that the end of art is moral: " . . . immoral art is by that very fact less good as art. The reason is that art (always meaning significant art) is essentially ordained to promote man's last end, the end of man as such, his specific end as a rational being, not just his material or animal end. It aims therefore at the same good as morality, though unlike morality it does not secure that good in itself but enhances the self-knowledge requisite for morality. Hence immoral art, since by its immorality it misrepresents the law of human nature, misrepresents that nature itself and to that extent fails as art. We grant that art aims at a means to morality but that aim (self-appreciation) is the intensification of an essential preliminary to moral action. If art produces (as it does if immoral) a false notion of human nature it at once falls short of its own purpose and interferes with moral action" (p. 210).

Martin Turnell advances his own version of art as being within the provenance of nature rather than grace, stressing the distinction:

> History shows that art is a spontaneous activity. Even in the most primitive societies we find man taking a delight in reproducing the world about him, and his attempts, however crude, have always found willing spectators. In fact art satisfies some natural need in man. Moreover, great art is always stimulating and revitalizing. It is always, in the language of Aristotle, in some sense an increase of being. It is natural that we should have become more conscious of our need for this kind of stimulus since the decay of institutional religion, but there could be no greater mistake than to think that we can live--as some people to-day try to live--by art alone. We may conclude that man has both religious and emotional needs, and that one activity can never be a substitute for another without doing violence to his nature, without ending in unhappiness and disillusionment.

Because it is natural, the poetic experience is more universal than Catholicism; drawing on Eliot's concept of tradition, Turnell can therefore write that "the great poet is not an individual, but a

---

Maritain, on the other hand, insists that the proper end of the artistic habitus is the good of the work of art itself. However, because art is the creation of a man who (inevitably) is involved with the moral question, there is an oblique relationship between the two spheres: "Art in its own domain is sovereign like wisdom; through its object it is subordinate neither to wisdom nor to prudence nor to any other virtue. But by the subject in which it exists, by man and in man it is subordinate--extrinsically subordinate--to the good of the human subject. As used by man's free will art enters a sphere which is not its own, but the sphere of moral standards and values, and in which there is no good against the good of human life. Whereas Art is supreme with respect to the work, Prudence--that is, moral wisdom, the virtue of right practical decision--Prudence is supreme with respect to man . . . . And because an artist is a man before being an artist, the autonomous world of morality is simply superior to (and more inclusive than) the autonomous world of art. There is no law against the law on which the destiny of man depends. In other words Art is indirectly and extrinsically subordinate to morality" (The Responsibility of the Artist, pp. 39-41).

member of a hierarchy of dead and living poets. Thus the experience we get from major poetry is not something that happened to an individual, it is something that happened to human nature." And he adds that "if a major poet is something that happens to human nature, it must happen to us all; whatever our beliefs we cannot remain unaffected by it; whether Catholics or not, we are bound to be affected by what happened to our human nature in Shakespeare or in Baudelaire."[12]

Despite the universality of literature, Turnell holds that the most effective vantage point for the critic is Catholicism. His reason, curiously enough, is that Catholicism is the most inclusive philosophy available: "The advantage of a Catholic philosophy is that when properly applied it is capable of enriching the critic, of opening new horizons to him, while a materialist system necessarily impoverishes him and narrows his outlook on account of its exclusiveness. A Catholic philosophy provides the most comprehensive picture of the universe; it is capable of finding a place for 'all experience', particularly for those experiences which materialism is driven to explain away." Here Turnell apparently considers materialism a distinct, though narrower, rival to Catholicism. Elsewhere, however, his position seems to be that Catholicism is the <u>only</u> coherent view, when he says that "the work of an unbeliever, of one whose work assumes no beliefs, does not present a picture of the universe which we as

[12]<u>Poetry and Crisis</u> (London, 1938), pp. 6-7, 141-142.

Catholics must reject . . . . It simply presents a series of moods which are largely unrelated and into which Catholics can enter like anyone else."[13] But are there no non-Roman Catholic poets who subscribe to a "believing" view of the universe which is not atheistic? Are there among writers no private pictures of the universe, no non-Roman Christianity, no non-Christian religions which Turnell can call coherent? He is himself incredibly narrow when he does not seem to recognize such possibilities.[14]

Turnell is wary, nonetheless, of strict dogmatizing: "the first thing a Catholic must realize," he writes, "is that in the literary order dogma must never be applied dogmatically. To assume that only certain forms of experience are valuable or that only those experiences

[13]Turnell, Poetry and Crisis, pp. 76, 57.

[14]The question of the universality of Roman Catholicism will arise for the non-Roman Christian, who might argue that his own tradition is more universally true than Roman Catholicism, but more likely would argue that no Christian communion possesses complete catholicity in the present state of denominational fragmentation. To the non-Christian, of course, any Christian perspective restricts the critic; this argument is vigorously put forward by Edward A. Bloom in "The Vatic Temper in Literary Criticism," Criticism, V, (1963), 297-315. I can only respond, as I did in a rejoinder to Dr. Bloom, "An Apologetic for Christian Criticism," Criticism, VI, (1964), 266-271, that (1) every critic has a viewpoint; it is better for him to be honest and thoughtful about it than prey to every wind of contemporary doctrine, and (2) that the best Christian Criticism is not narrowly doctrinaire but sensitive to the integrity and complexity of the work of art.

are valuable which are completely Christian, is to condemn oneself to sterility at the outset. They may be the most valuable experiences, but they are by no means the only valuable experiences. If we are to be true to the ideal of comprehensiveness, we must be able to sympathise with the fresh experiences that are evolved in the course of civilisation."[15] Furthermore, he insists that "the critic must approach works of art as works of art, not as sociological treatises. The clue is not the poet's beliefs or his morality, but his style."[16]

A similar theory is advanced by Arthur Machen, who proposes to separate "literature from the mass of stuff which is not literature" with the following definition: "literature is the expression, through the aesthetic medium of words, of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, and that which in any way is out of harmony with these dogmas is not literature." At first glance this seems preposterously dogmatic, but Machen softens the blow by adding: "No literal compliance with Christianity is needed, no, nor even an acquaintance with the doctrines of Christianity." This is possible because "from the literary standpoint, Catholic dogma is merely the witness, under a special symbolism, of the enduring facts of human nature and the universe."[17] I suspect

[15]Turnell, Poetry and Crisis, p. 77.

[16]In this Turnell's position resembles that of F. R. Leavis, his contemporary. It is noteworthy that Q. D. Leavis, while she attacks the Anglican critics writing in Theology, compliments Turnell's Arena, calling it "a focus for Catholic discrimination" ("Charlotte Yonge and 'Christian Discrimination,'" p. 157).

[17]Hieroglyphics (New York, 1923), pp. 160, 162-163.

that this is going about as far as a Roman Catholic can go in stressing natural truth (though Machen never uses the Thomistic categories) over against revelation.

Anglicans lack the authority of a Vatican pronouncement, but one could point to Hooker and the Caroline Divines, to the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists, and to Paley's Evidences and Natural Theology to indicate a continuous preoccupation with various aspects of natural theology in their tradition. It is perhaps the importance of natural theology in Anglicanism which throws into stark relief the paucity of natural theology in twentieth-century theology as a whole, and which has occasioned calls for its revival. The most influential of these is H. E. Root's "Beginning All Over Again."[18] The title in itself is indicative of the fact that natural theology, which Root defines as "that body of knowledge which may be obtained by human reason alone without the aid of revelation,"[19] is today "the sick man of Europe."[20] He notes the older natural theologies of St. Thomas and Descartes, the challenges to the possibility of natural

[18]Soundings, ed. A. R. Vidler (Cambridge, England, 1962), a volume meant to continue the tradition of collections of essays which have provided the direction for Anglican divinity for over a century. Vidler, in his introduction, lists these collections: Essays and Reviews 1860; Lux Mundi 1889; Foundations 1912; Essays Catholic and Critical 1926 (p. x).

[19]Root, "Beginning All Over Again," p. 3. Quoted from the Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London, 1957), p. 940.

[20]Root, p. 3. Quoted from Ninian Smart, "Revelation, Reason, and Religion," Prospect for Metaphysics, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (London, 1961), p. 80.

theology by Hume and Kant, and the modern denials of natural theology by "the fashionable biblical theology" (presumably the Barthian school) and "the fashionable analytic philosophy." Given this history, it is no surprise that natural theology is in poor health. But the point of Root's essay is that it must not be allowed to die, for unless the theologians resume contact with non-theological modes of thought they will cut themselves off definitively from the intellectual world of all non-theologians--something the Church in a post-Christian era cannot afford to do, for the result is likely to be a dangerously irrational fideism. The erosion since Kant of the older natural theology, however, makes necessary a new understanding of it in the light of modern thought. At this point Root cites with approval recent theological attempts to deal with analytic philosophy. Then (and this is particularly interesting) he closes the essay with a plea to the new natural theologian, for the health of theology, to take especial cognizance of the contemporary imagination as it reveals itself in literature: "In the end, any plea for the restoration of natural theology must be an appeal to boldness. We shall have to contemplate and absorb the disturbing visions of human nature which find expression in serious modern literature."[21]

In fact, knowledge of literature is seen as the propaedeutic to a viable natural theology. Root writes: "Before natural theology can begin to function in our day it must have a sense of the inwardness of

[21]Root, pp. 5, 19.

the lives we lead. Where do we look now for faithful, stimulating, profound accounts of what it is to be alive in the twentieth century? The inevitable answer to that question carries a judgment. We look to the poet or novelist or dramatist or film producer. In creative works of art we see ourselves anew, come to understand ourselves better and come into touch with just those sources of imagination which should nourish efforts in natural theology."[22] Twenty-two years earlier, Michael Roberts voiced a similar suggestion in Theology: "The purposes which poetry can serve in relation to theology and morality are these: it can render more vivid and more urgent the realities on which rational theology rests, it can put moral truths in a persuasive and effective form, and it can help to resist that narrowing of sympathy and coarsening of sentiment which is itself immoral."[23] The tone of Roberts' article is much more conservative than that of Root; it also shows the influence of the Scrutiny school on the critics who wrote in Theology.

Going still further back in time, we see that definite use is made of natural theology by one of the earliest theologians to take up the question of literature for the Christian. A. H. Strong, an American Baptist, states in the introduction to The Great Poets and Their Theology that "the author is inclined to believe that the great poets, taken together, give united and harmonious testimony to the fundamental

[22]Root, p. 18.

[23]"The Moral Influence of Poetry," Theology, XXXIX (January 1939), 25.

conceptions of natural religion, if not to those of the specifically Christian scheme."[24] It would be difficult, I suspect, to find a contemporary Baptist expressing such confidence in natural theology.

The first really serious and systematic examination of the relationship between theology and literature, Amos N. Wilder's Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition, also makes use of the doctrine. Wilder reviews the age-old denigration of poetry by religionists as well as the modern emphasis on poetic autonomy, and nevertheless arrives at the position that even the poets who consciously exclude religious elements from their work "in the ultimate experience that animates the poem find themselves on religious ground." He defends this position on the basis of natural theology, arguing that the theory that poetic and religious experience are closely related is based on the assumption of "a natural or universal revelation which has its expression in either art or religion. Religion must therefore include the witness of poetry among its evidences."[25]

A strong call for a Christian Criticism based on natural theology is voiced as well by the distinguished literary scholar Frederick A. Pottle, who is the author of a pamphlet entitled Christian Teaching of Literature.[26] In it he writes: "I suspect that most of us (and

[24]Philadelphia, 1897, p. vii.

[25]New York, 1952, pp. 18, 20.

[26]New York, 1956.

especially those of us who grew up in a Protestant and Evangelical tradition) have to get more extensive notions of natural theology before we shall be ready to give a really satisfactory answer to the question of what constitutes a Christian teaching of literature. We need to overhaul our notions of the relations of divine and secular truth, of the knowledge we have been accustomed to call revealed and the knowledge gained (as we say) by the unaided operations of the human intellect." But since it is held by many philosophers and theologians that "all arrival at truth is by a species of revelation," Pottle suggests the alternative terms special and general revelation. Under the rubric of general revelation he puts not only the exercise of human reason but the exercise of the imagination as well: both are "religious." Religion in the broadest sense includes both kinds of revelation, for it is "the total response of man to the fullness of Christ."[27]

Another perspective on literature from the standpoint of natural theology is provided in a brief warning by Nathan A. Scott, Jr. to those who would imperially impose a ready-made Christian system onto the study of literature: "The Christian scholar . . . had better not come prancing into the forums of our cultural life with a Christian system of aesthetics or with a Christian system of psychology or with a Christian system of anything else. For the world is one, the same

[27]Pottle, pp. 3-6.

for the Christian as for all other men of whatever persuasion: if Christ is truly the Logos, then he is witnessed to in all apprehensions of truth, whether they occur within a framework of Christian concern or not."[28] Logos theology is at least as old as Philo of Alexandria (B.C. 20-A.D. 42?) who identified the Old Testament Wisdom (e.g. in Proverbs) with the Logos which "flows out of the being of God Himself, and is the agent not merely through whom God created the world, but from whom all other powers flow."[29] The Church identified the Logos with Christ as the source of all truth, as the basis for the development of natural theology.[30]

Protestant theology, both Reformed (Calvinist) and Lutheran, ever since the sixteenth century has harbored strong suspicion of natural theology or the idea of natural law, stressing that the Fall has perverted man's loyalties so that he tends not to perceive natural truth or act on the basis of natural goodness. It is therefore somewhat of a surprise to read a modern Lutheran, David Baily Harned, appealing to natural law and contending that it serves "to guard an indispensable Christian affirmation about God and prevent the reduction of the Genesis account of creation to a sort of dubious archaeological appendage to

[28]"Faith and Art in a World Awry," The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (New York, 1964), p. 6.

[29]Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York, 1918), p. 17.

[30]The exact meaning of logos in St. John's Gospel is a matter of scholarly dispute, but obviously the usage appears similar to that of Philo.

Christian faith. Its function is to put down the gnosticism that is a perennial weed in the Protestant garden." He centers his argument, however, on Christology rather than rational philosophy: "Approached from the vantage point of the gospel, creation means grace. It is the promise freely offered to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ which is the meaning and goal of creation." This is the promise of redemption, by which Christ, the Second Person of the Godhead, was the image of the perfect and fulfilled man before the creation of the universe. His life and gospel provide the standard of human life, of faith and love-of-neighbor tending towards what Harned labels "community." In this way Harned is able to arrive at a distinctly Protestant definition of the natural: "Although the content of the natural cannot and must not ever be defined in any precise way, it is clarified by this revelation of the Lord who requires man's obedience. Whatever contributes to the design of this Lord for community is the natural, no matter whether undertaken in faith or ignorance of the Christ. Whatever corrupts and erodes such life together is the unnatural."[31]

But how, as Harned himself asks, is this relevant to art? It is relevant in the manner in which art is conducive to this community, and Harned suggests several possibilities. The historian Johan Huizinga wrote that art was a form of play;[32] agreeing with this, Harned observes

[31] Theology and the Arts (Philadelphia, 1966), pp. 149, 153, 167.

[32] Presumably Harned has in mind Huizinga's Homo Ludens (London, 1949).

that art as play is "the way men learn to respect order and limits, the cement of community." This is true because "it shapes the competitive impulse, so that community does not degenerate into a war of all against all."[33]

Also, art protects against that which threatens community. Even the most pessimistic, bleak work of literature, for example, contains implicit assumptions about human experience of the world--its specificities and concreteness--and of other people as well. Furthermore, it contains assumptions about the coherence and worth of this experience which testify, however obliquely, to human community. The very fact that art is intelligibly formed expression witnesses to the possibility that human experience can be meaningfully organized, clarified, and shared. Finally, by clarifying and structuring experience, the artist in words helps to "redeem" language from becoming stereotyped and jargonized, the excuse for shoddy and unscrutinized emotions or the victim of the propagandist and the salesman. All these perversions of language are unnatural, for they get in the way of genuine human encounters and relationships which contribute to community.

Theology of Culture and Christian Criticism

Also associated with the habit of natural theology, though perhaps more prominent among those Christian Critics whose background is Protestant and therefore less sympathetic to the traditional term, is

[33]Harned, p. 169.

the theory that art is significant to the Christian as an expression of the cultural situation which must be understood if the gospel is to be made relevant to man today.

During the 1930's at least two theologians, one German and one American, began to take seriously the contemporary culture. The German, Paul Tillich, was in the next thirty years to become very important for the theology of Christian Criticism. In The Religious Situation, an early work, he analyzes the twentieth-century revolt from capitalism, scientism, and rationalism, and draws heavily on the artistic life of the times while doing so because, as he puts it: "Art indicates what the character of a spiritual situation is; it does this more immediately and directly than do science and philosophy for it is less burdened by objective considerations. Its symbols have something of a revelatory character while scientific conceptualization must suppress the symbolical in favor of objective adequacy." In painting, symbolism, mysticism, and expressionism have destroyed realism and impressionism, but "a new realism" is on the rise, which has exposed the "demonism" in the present society and promises to develop into a "belief-ful realism." The translator of the book into English, H. Richard Niebuhr, himself a theologian of note, explains that belief-ful realism refuses to idealize or romanticize; instead it "sees the world with the sober eyes of the scientist or realistic artist, accepting it at the same time as symbolic of the eternal and unconditioned source of all meaning and ground of

all being."[34] Here are the seeds of Tillich's later theology of art, but for the moment the emphasis is historical.

The American contribution, Contemporary American Literature and Religion, by Halford E. Luccock, is not to be ranked with the work of Tillich. Its merit lies in its recognition that modern literature, literature by Americans, is worthy of extended theological notice. It is not an attempt at a systematic Christian aesthetic; Luccock, in fact, is too modest to claim even that his observations constitute literary criticism. At the beginning of his book he declares: "We have undertaken to look at some of the creative literature of America since the war and its relation to religion, not as an exercise in literary criticism, but looking at literature as the expression of life, the symptoms of the moods of the time, its health and its sickness, its despairs and its hopes; the wrist of the common body of life, as it were, where we can count its heartbeats. All of these things are primary concerns of religion." Unlike many other Christians, he does not flail out wildly at "decadent" modern naturalism. Instead, he defends such novelists as Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson as honestly portraying modern dilemmas, and chooses to attack what remains of the older romantic optimism which, paradoxically, has elements in it of Puritanical repressiveness (he has read H. L. Mencken, it is clear). On the other hand, he is depressed by T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land and

[34]New York, 1932, pp. 53-54, 70, xi-xii.

the work of Edwin Arlington Robinson, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Aldous Huxley, and James Joyce as evidencing "the gray twilight of religious faith." He sees the characters in the novels by these writers to be, as Joseph Wood Krutch demonstrated in The Modern Temper, incapable of tragedy. They are also incapable of deep personal relationships: love affairs, for instance, become "only a succession of adventures without vital meaning."[35] Still, Luccock can infer a "search for God" from such works as O'Neill's Lazarus Laughed and Marc Connolly's Green Pastures even if the traditional labels are no longer affixed to man's spiritual longings. His book cannot be called great criticism, but many of its themes will be echoed by later Christian Critics.

As was noted above, the Christian Critic who first undertook to carry out a theoretical program was the American biblical theologian, Amos N. Wilder. In The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry, which examines the religious significance of the works of such post World War I writers as Robinson Jeffers, D. H. Lawrence, Yeats, and Eliot, Wilder is conscious that he is breaking the canons of the New Critics but he defends his broader approach: "I would try to keep in their good graces, first, by constantly insisting that viewed as poetry this material must always first be judged by the aesthetic canons of poetry and not by the alleged superior spirituality or truth of its contents. But we will add that whether for better or worse this poetry abundantly

[35]Chicago, 1934, pp. 166, 176.

evidences basic viewpoints or convictions. Such data we should be able to use for our purposes, being careful, however, as to how far we identify the particular author under consideration with the given viewpoint." The new poets are to be studied by the modern Christian because they "are apt to be the first to register the profound tides that move society and culture. They are the sensitive ones that first register and react to changes in the climate."[36] The metaphysical crises they record can only be ignored by the Church if that institution hides its head in a fusty orthodoxy, and if it ignores the present workings of the Holy Spirit in opening the eyes of moderns to contemporary perdition and to the vicissitudes of the new faiths men have turned to upon the collapse of the traditions.

In later books Wilder fills in the historical background he only suggests in his first volume. In Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition he discusses the primitive and biblical relationship of religion and poetry, and traces the influences of Christianity (and especially Protestantism) on British poetry since Milton and on American poetry since the Puritans. He also describes the special problems for modern Catholic, Protestant, and "secular" literature. The Catholic is caught in the rigidity of post-Tridentine theology; the Protestant lacks a coherent body of symbolism; and the secular poet is in danger of making his secularism his religion without realizing it. In Theology and Modern Literature, the shortest of his volumes, Wilder rejects the

[36]New York, 1940, pp. xix, 3.

"Plea for Christian Discrimination," pointing out the shortcomings of the Theology group but also outlining possible directions for a Christian aesthetic with a Protestant orientation. Protestant freedom, because of the lack of a permanently constraining theological system, can "effect new combinations of grace and nature,"[37] and allows the Protestant critic to see grace "incognito," hidden or indirectly present in the work of such writers as Robinson Jeffers and William Faulkner.

Thus far the critics cited seem to retain something of the traditional distinction between the supernatural and the natural, the sacred and the secular--though with Luccock and Wilder the borderline is becoming less clear and less important. For Paul Tillich such distinctions are even less applicable; what is important for him is the distinction between the "preliminary concern" and "ultimate concern" (which is his definition of religion). This is not the old sacred-secular division into two mutually exclusive or complementary spheres, for Tillich writes that "the holy embraces itself and the secular, precisely as the divine embraces itself and the demonic. Everything secular is implicitly related to the holy. It can become the bearer of the holy. The divine can become manifest in it. Nothing is essentially and inescapably secular. Everything has the dimension of depth, and in the moment in which the third dimension is actualized, holiness appears. Everything secular is potentially sacred, open to consecration."[38] It is the

[37]Wilder, Theology and Modern Literature, p. 85.

[38]Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 218.

dimension of depth which constitutes the religious character, for Tillich defines religion not as "a special function of man's spiritual life" but as "the dimension of depth in all of its functions."[39] Another way Tillich expresses this is by saying that through his culture man expresses his unconditioned concern, "the object of total surrender, demanding also the surrender of our subjectivity while we look at it. It is a matter of infinite passion and interest."[40]

Thus he describes religion and culture as inseparable: "As the substance of culture is religion, so the form of religion is culture. There is only this difference, that in religion the substance which is the unconditioned source and abyss of meaning is designated, and the cultural forms serve as symbols for it; whereas in culture the form, which is the conditioned meaning is designated, and the substance, which is the unconditioned meaning becomes perceptible only indirectly throughout the autonomous form."[41] One implication of this is that art becomes important for the theologian: "Pictures, poems, and music can become objects of theology, not from the point of view of their aesthetic form, but from the point of view of their power of expressing some aspects of that which concerns us ultimately, in and through

[39]Tillich, Theology of Culture, pp. 5-6.

[40]Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 12.

[41]The Interpretation of History, trans. N. A. Rasetzski and Elsa L. Talmey (New York, 1936), pp. 49-50.

their aesthetic form."[42]

Given this existential dimension of human culture, what then is the theologian's task? Tillich's criticism resembles the "reading of culture" proposed by such critics as Wilder; it arises out of Tillich's "method of correlation" by which the theological method is fitted to problems of culture.[43] The analysis of the human condition, he writes, takes into account man's cultural expressions in all their forms, including poetry, drama, and the novel; "the theologian organizes these materials in relation to the answer given by the Christian message."[44] Had he said no more than this, he would be immensely important for going beyond the other critics, who perceived that the theologian must consider man's culture in order to discover his deepest insights into himself: Tillich announces that the entire theological enterprise must be guided by the direction of man's so-called "secular" life. Furthermore, in his art criticism Tillich uses terms which have been picked up by some of the Christian Critics of literature, and he also makes what amount to aesthetic judgments.

In The Protestant Era[45] he returns to the notion of realism which we saw earlier in The Religious Situation. He contrasts to realism two other artistic attitudes which he finds inadequate: "idealism"

[42]Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 13.

[43]See above, Chapter One.

[44]Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 63.

[45]Trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago, 1948).

he considers an escape from reality in an attempt to transcend it; "self-limiting realism" (positivism, pragmatism, empiricism) goes to the opposite extreme and denies transcendence. Belief-ful or "self-transcending" realism combines the two extremes: it "tries to point to the spiritual meaning of the real by using its given forms."[46] This preference lies behind his specific praise of expressionism in "Protestantism and Artistic Style."[47] Expressionism both deals with reality and transcends its literalness. It radically transforms ordinarily experienced reality, expressing through selected elements of it the "'dimension of depth' in the encountered reality, the ground and abyss in which everything is rooted."[48] Tillich sees this expressive depth as the hallmark of all great periods of religious art,[49] for it is this style ("style" is defined as "that which points

[46]Tillich, Protestant Era, p. 67. It is thus like the movement in art in the early twentieth century called "expressionism," in which artists broke up the natural forms of things so that the spiritual significance would become evident. In the post-expressionist movement there was more emphasis on natural forms, but the new realism, as it was called, "was not interested in the natural forms of things for their own sake but for their power of expressing the profounder levels and the universal significance of things" (p. 67).

[47]First published in The Christian Scholar, XL (December 1957), 307-311, under the title "Protestantism and the Contemporary Style in the Visual Arts" and reprinted, with alterations, in Theology of Culture.

[48]Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 74.

[49]I take it that expressionism in this sense is not to be confused with "expressionism" as the label for a specific approach to painting in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, expressionism (in the larger sense of an interpretation of existence) is characteristic of twentieth-century art as opposed to "realistic" nineteenth-century art which minimized the dimension of depth, for Tillich asserts later in the same

to a self-interpretation of man"[50] rather than the presence of traditionally "religious" subject matter or a certain form which is significant for a theology of culture.[51]

As a concrete example of truly "religious" art, Tillich considers Picasso's "Guernica," which he calls "a great Protestant painting" because it emphasizes human finitude, mortality, and bondage to

---

essay that "the rediscovery of the expressive element in art since about 1900 is a decisive event for the relation of religion and the visual arts. It has made religious art again possible" (p. 74). And in an earlier essay in which he seems to be describing the same style he claims that in the visual arts it includes the movements usually known as expressionism, surrealism, cubism, and futurism--all of which "attempt to look into the depths of reality, below any surface and any beautification of the surface and any organic unity." ("Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," Christianity and the Existentialists, ed. Carl Michalson [New York, 1956], p. 137).

[50]Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 70.

[51]Tillich's analysis has not gone unquestioned. Roger Hazelton is severely critical of him at this point: "Any work of art is both expressive and impressive and so must be reckoned with on both counts. This, I believe, is where Paul Tillich's view of the relation between religion and art sadly fails us. He does not provide us with anything like a perspective for Christian discrimination because he thinks of the art work as wholly expressive and judges it accordingly. His conception of a 'religious style' comes remarkably close to that of German expressionism . . . . The work of art is for Tillich an ontological tool or token; it is not, however, a seal or pledge of reality in the Christian, sacramental sense" (New Accents in Contemporary Theology [New York, 1960], p. 22).

destructive forces.[52] Such a portraiture of man, he says, demands acceptance of the Reformation paradox that "it is man in anxiety, guilt, and despair who is the object of God's unconditional acceptance." The fact that "Guernica" expresses the human situation so courageously implies that, in a sense, the human situation is thereby transcended, for "he who can bear and express guilt shows that he already knows about 'acceptance-in-spite-of.' He who can bear and express meaninglessness shows that he experiences meaning within his desert of meaninglessness."[53] In an earlier essay published in the same collection, "Aspects of a Religious Analysis of Culture," Tillich wrote:

> Some may have the strength to take anxiety and meaninglessness courageously upon themselves and live creatively, expressing the predicament of the most sensitive people in our time in cultural production. It is this way to which we owe the artistic and philosophical works of culture in the first half of the 20th century. They are creative expressions of the destructive trends in contemporary culture. The great works of the visual arts, of music, of poetry, of literature, of architecture, of dance, of philosophy, show in their style both the encounter with non-being, and the strength which can stand this encounter and shape it creatively.[54]

[52]Tillich, Theology of Culture, p. 68. In The Protestant Era he defines the "Protestant Principle" as "the fact that it transcends its own religious and confessional character, that it cannot be identified wholly with any of its particular historical forms" (p. 162). In the introduction to that book he says: "Christianity is final only in so far as it has the power of criticizing and transforming each of its historical manifestations; and just this power is the Protestant principle" (p. xviii).

[53]Tillich, Theology of Culture, pg. 68.

[54]Tillich, Theology of Culture, pp. 46-47.

Other critics, like Luccock and Wilder, praised artists who faced modern man's plight honestly, but Tillich assigns this honesty a particular theological value.

Roger Hazelton sees two stages in the modern encounter between religion and the arts. The first, exemplified by Tillich, is criticism which documents man's present alienation from God. The second, more genuinely a dialogue with the modern arts, deals with issues such as the nature of tragedy; the significance of words, images, myth; the quest for a Christian poetics; and the relation of imagination to belief.[55] The man who is probably the most important Christian Critic on the present scene, Nathan A. Scott, Jr., has written criticism characteristic of both "stages"; thus his name will come up in connection with all the major themes of Christian Criticism, for he is without a doubt the most versatile and prolific writer in the field. In this chapter I shall merely sketch out his own poetics, which are presented, for the most part, in Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier.

Scott begins by a thorough review of "the modern mind": the history of secularization, and the discrediting of the imagination by a positivism which he traces from Hobbes to the present linguistic analysts. He then reviews modern literary criticism, especially the New Criticism, and concludes that it is inadequate. The New Criticism, he maintains, has insisted on the independence of the poem as a linguistic structure free from any referential function outside itself; but "if the work of

[55]Hazelton, New Accents in Contemporary Theology, p. 15.

literary art exists in complete isolation from all those contexts that lie beyond the one established by the work itself, if it neither points outward toward the world nor inward toward the poet's subjectivity, if it is wholly self-contained and cut off from the general world of meaning, why then it would seem that nothing really can be said about it at all." Trying to free criticism from such a narrow impasse, Scott turns to a discussion of the creative process. He mentions Maritain's analysis of creative intuition, which involves a double activity: "the poet permits himself to be invaded by the reality of 'Things' and . . . he himself seeks to invade the deepest recesses of his own subjectivity." The merit of Maritain, Scott observes, is that he stresses the prime importance of what Scott terms poetic vision, "the act of consent which the poet gives to some fundamental hypothesis about the nature of existence which itself in turn introduces structure and coherence for him into the formless stuff of life itself." Therefore he can say that the literary work "is <u>oriented</u> toward the world of existence that transcends the work--and the work is <u>oriented</u> by the <u>vision</u>, by the <u>belief</u>, by the <u>ultimate concern</u> of which it is an incarnation: its orientation, that is to say, is essentially religious." Therefore criticism, too, must be theological, he concludes; but it is literary as well, he insists, reminding us that he has learned from the New Critics that "whatever it is that <u>orients</u> a work of literary art or that constitutes the <u>ultimate concern</u> that it embodies is something that will disclose itself in the ways in which the writer brings the resources of language

into the service of his project."[56]

His language in these passages indicates that Scott has drawn not only on Maritain but also on Tillich to provide theological background for his own critical theory. Furthermore, he brings to his aid the philosophy of Martin Buber, the modern Jewish writer whose influence has been profound among existentially minded Christian thinkers. Buber distinguishes between two modes of confronting experience: in terms of "the world of 'It,' which comprises all the things that we experience and use, all the things that we arrange and organize and manipulate; this is, primarily, the world of science and technology"; and in terms of "the world of 'Thou,' . . . here we are addressed, and we must respond; and thus the individual is no longer the sole arbiter of the situation, since it includes, besides himself, another independent center of intelligence and volition--and between these two the relation is that of an I to a Thou who is not to be experienced or used but who is to be met in relation."[57] The world of "I-Thou" involves love; and in this way the "I" becomes a truly human person instead of an isolated self. Scott proceeds to say that Buber has elaborated a principle relevant not only to metaphysics and ethics but also to aesthetics: the good poem moves us to a relational experience with the

[56]Scott, Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier, pp. 28, 30-31, 33, 38-39.

[57]Scott, Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier, pp. 47-48. Scott has reference to Buber's famous book I and Thou (Edinburgh, 1937).

world incarnated within it by the poet's vision of Creation. To be moved to contemplate created things is to avoid the "angelism" which attempts to escape the concretion of existence and fly to the absolute idea. Against this temptation the Christian Critic calls for affirmation of Creation, of finite existence.[58]

The end of such criticism will be evaluation of the work of art under consideration. After the Christian Critic has ascertained the nature of the poetic vision incarnated in the style of the poem, he will say one of three things to the poet: (a) "your view of life does not adequately account for all the facts of experience with which your book purports to deal;" (b) "your understanding of the human situation does not appear to be internally coherent: certain of your crucial assertions appear to be at odds with others, and thus your book does not convey a unified and cogent response to experience"; or (c) "the principles in accordance with which you organize and make sense of your experience, though applicable perhaps to certain segments of life, seem not to be capable of illuminating all its heights and depths and thus appear to be narrow and limited in scope." Then the Christian Critic must go a step further and "demonstrate the respects in which the inadequacy of a writer's metaphysic or religion is a factor making for the <u>aesthetic</u> failure of his poem or novel, in so far as it fails to provide an

[58]The principle here, as Scott points out, is the Incarnation, seeing the Divine Ground through conditioned realities. I shall discuss this principle further in Chapter Three, below.

appropriate support for his sensibility and an adequate myth for the interpretation of the human story." He is not to sit in judgment on a work of art armed with the standards of some dogmatic orthodoxy, though Scott admits that the Christian will take note of "the extreme difficulty that a writer must face who does not finally view the human tragedy in the light of the Cross."[59] In other words, he will not attempt to palm off his criticism as neutral or objective--which would be either deception or unexamined naïveté.

Secular Theology and Christian Criticism

The critics discussed thus far have in some way looked at art from a theological perspective; they have entered into what Tillich would call a dialogue between Christianity and art. But increasingly in recent years the role of religious presuppositions has declined for some critics, who have become more open to man's culture and at the same time more critical of religion. If we were to retain the classical division between the natural and the supernatural or the secular and the sacred, it would be the former which we would see looming more and more significantly while the latter is questioned, and finally totally abandoned by the "radical theologians."

This movement to the "world," which at this writing is probably the most outstanding mark of the most recent theology, was adumbrated by some of the Christian Critics of literature while Protestant theology

[59]"The Relation of Theology to Literary Criticism," Journal of Religion, XXXIII (October 1953), 271-272.

as a whole was dominated by the shallow romantic optimism which prevailed until World War II, and later, by the opposite tendency, pessimistic, world-denying Barthianism. Meanwhile Christian Critics were going outside theology and the Church searching for the prophetic voice. Luccock, in Contemporary American Literature and Religion (1934) accused a complacent Protestantism of being puritanical, especially about sex; devoted to "a viciously unwholesome preoccupation with the wholesome"; and sold out to a rosy, laissez-faire optimism. The remedy he recommends is the realistic fiction of Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis; this current literature was not so much concerned with attacking God as it showed no interest or awareness of him. But to react negatively to this would be only parochial. We must expand our definition of religion; if we do, "we find much of the literature of today occupied with the examination and interpretation of those experiences which are and have been of vital concern, historically, to religion." Luccock sees as a hopeful sign the fact that at last "The Christian religion has broken its theological jail. It is loose in the world. Nothing human is foreign to it."[60]

Amos N. Wilder goes a step further. His eyes are focused on the writers of "contemporary perdition" and the cultists of irrational faiths that are alternatives to Christianity (e.g., Robinson Jeffers and D. H. Lawrence). But like Luccock, it is to writers rather than

[60]Luccock, pp. 130, 9, 10.

to the Church that Wilder turns when he wants ethical perceptiveness: "There is much to be said for the thesis that the most significant and searching discussion of ethics today is going on not in the churches but outside them." And he adds that this is especially true "in the secular and agnostic literature of today, particularly in fiction." He defends Yeats's rejection of the Christian option on the grounds that too often Christianity denies the world with which the artistic vision must deal:

> For the poets the scandal of Christ is his asceticism. The very medium of their art as poets; indeed, the very element of their experience as men, is the gamut of human living, emotions, drama. "Man's resinous heart" and the loves, loyalties, the pride, the grief it feeds--these are the stuff of poetry and the sense of life. And the Cross lays its shadow on this; it draws away all the blood from the glowing body of existence and leaves it mutilated and charred in the hope of some thin ethereal felicity. The wine of life is changed to water . . . . The very word "spiritual" has come to signify inanity and vacuity. The refusal of religion by the modern poet, and by more than moderns and by more than poets, goes back to the apparent denial of human living by religion, to the supposed incompatibility of life with life and of art with faith.[61]

As a result of this situation the Protestant artist (Wilder is here adopting Tillich's "Protestant Principle" of constant self-criticism and reformation) is allied to the creative unrest in our society, which is moving away from the traditional forms of Christianity, he concludes: "The artist of Protestant inspiration runs the risks of secularization; indeed, he is often radically secularized . . . .

[61]Wilder, Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry, pp. 166, 196.

Protestantism as a creative tradition is today in many respects like a river that has gone underground. But it gives signs of itself especially among the secularists, and even in the blasphemers." What theological interpretation is to be placed on this strange new state of affairs? Wilder's response is to affirm secularity. In a chapter entitled "The Surprises of Grace" he writes: "The most remarkable feature with regard to the situation of the Christian heritage today is that its custody has to a considerable degree passed over into the keeping of secularized groups and forces. The disarray of institutional religion and the isolation of its more conservative bodies from modern life have left the gospel if not homeless at least in a highly ambiguous position. This has involved the 'world' in a peculiar responsibility for the faith and in a process of travail with the faith, in considerable measure apart from the guidance of the church."[62]

Hans Egon Holthusen goes even further and identifies the Christian poet in our day not only with blasphemy but with godlessness: "Can anyone deny that the Christian poet shares in the suffering from the godlessness, theologically speaking, of our epoch, or that he profits, aesthetically speaking, from the same godlessness? The Christian poet, like the secular writers of the present age, is given a freedom and a responsibility to 'define his own reality.' He too feels a melancholy emancipation of spirit, the dizzy free-floating freedom of the godless. Whatever is human moves him, but it does not shock him. He must

[62]Wilder, Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition, p. 259.

grapple with it."[63]

Appendix: Radical Secularism and the Death of God

The movement from the sacred to the secular which was evident in Christian Criticism during the forties and fifties has become a major tendency of theology, especially what is called "radical" theology, in the 1960's. A major influence on its development was the "secular" theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German martyred by the Nazis. In his Letters and Papers from Prison Bonhoeffer questions the traditional concept of sinful man who needs God to extricate him from his spiritual plight, to provide supernatural strength and an ultimate answer to the mysteries which he has not been able to fathom. "Religious man," in this sense, is fast being replaced by a new man who feels himself to be autonomous, to be capable of dealing with scientific, artistic, and even ethical problems without aid from a cosmic Being. Christianity for man "come of age" is not, then, a pious dependence on an omnipotent God but being "for others" in the world, in the realm of the secular, as Christ was "the man for others."[64]

Three contemporary American "radical" theologians influenced by Bonhoeffer, Gabriel Vahanian, Thomas J. J. Altizer, and William Hamilton, all contribute their own re-evaluations of Christianity in the modern

[63]"What is Christian in a Christian Literature?" Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, p. 99.

[64]Ed. Eberhard Bethge, 3rd ed. (New York, 1967), pp. 209-210.

world, but they are united in proclaiming what Nietzsche in The Gay Science called "the death of God" and in finding ample documentation in imaginative literature for the thesis that the old notions of God are no longer viable. Gabriel Vahanian is the most conservative of the three; he contends, buttressing his argument from the works of Graham Greene, Georges Bernanos, Samuel Beckett, Dostoyevsky, Kafka, and other writers, that the death of God is a "cultural phenomenon" which liberates us from the old sacral-mythological world-view and perhaps paves the way for a new clarification of the concept of God as the "Wholly Other."[65]

Thomas J. J. Altizer goes further than describing the death of God as a cultural phenomenon: for him it is "an historical event . . . God has died in our cosmos, in our history, in our Existenz."[66] Indeed, Altizer constructs an elaborate system in which secularity and immanence are extensions of the Incarnation, of spirit becoming flesh--this descent in turn being part of a larger dialectical movement in which the sacred and the secular are moving towards eventual synthesis.[67] He finds William Blake's "Christian atheism," in which the sacred becomes the secular and

[65]Wait Without Idols (New York, 1964), p. 246. See also his The Death of God (New York, 1961).

[66]"America and the Future of Theology," Radical Theology and the Death of God, T. J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton (Indianapolis, 1966), p. 11.

[67]"The Sacred and the Profane," Radical Theology, pp. 171-191.

the secular sacred, an anticipation of his own theories.[68]

The easiest to understand and also the most pessimistic of the Death-of-God theologians is William Hamilton. In The New Essence of Christianity[69] he cites Camus' The Plague and Beckett's Waiting for Godot as evidence that modern man no longer experiences faith or hope. Perhaps, he writes elsewhere, love is the only option open, love directed to where Christ is, not as an object of faith but as the "place" to be, standing with the neighbor.[70]

I have included these theologians not as Christian Critics of literature in the usual sense, but because they seem to be turning more and more to the kind of "revelation" afforded by modern literature of the plight of post-Christian man. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. would take an additional step, holding that the Death-of-God theologians have gone as far as possible in acceding to an immanentist view of the universe. The danger of their vision is that the world and human experience becomes flattened out in a cold, scientistic attitude. Scott advises a re-examination of modern literature for here, he feels, post-Christian man may once again find available the experiences of transcendence and depth which would revivify theology.[71]

[68]"William Blake and the Role of Myth in the Radical Christian Vision," Radical Theology, pp. 171-191.

[69]New York, 1966.

[70]"Thursday's Child," Radical Theology, p. 92.

[71]"The Crisis of Faith in the New Theology and the Promise of Grace in Poetic Art," The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature (New Haven, 1966), pp. 145-186.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CREATIVE ACT IN THEOLOGY AND ART: CREATION, INCARNATION, AND TRINITY

In the first two chapters I have dealt with the general problem of a rapprochement between Christianity and artistic literature; the remaining chapters will assume some kind of valid relationship between the two and will concentrate on specific areas of concern.

The Doctrine of the Creation

Though in the heyday of the New Criticism speculation about the genesis of poetry was suspect as an attempt to deflect attention from the poem to the poet's intentions or psychology or biography, interest in the creative process never disappeared. Among Christian Critics the doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, and Trinity have been helpful in keeping this interest alive. There has been conjecture at least since Aristotle that somehow artistic creativity was an analogue to cosmic creativity. The Poetics uses various forms and derivatives of ποιέω (create) in discussing poetry; it begins with Aristotle announcing that he will be concerned with "the poetic art [ποιητικῆς] as a whole and its species, the particular capacities of each; how the plots should be constructed if the poetic process [ποίησις] is to be

artistically satisfactory, and further how many and what kind of parts it has; and all the other questions that belong to the same branch of study." But ποιέω has to do not only with the creation of poetry but with "construction" or "production" in general, and can refer to all kinds of "making": furniture, houses, clothes, etc.[1] But that Aristotle intended the word to have religious overtones is suggested by at least one modern commentator: "The artist is a poietes, a 'maker,' and nature is clearly the great Maker, the great 'poet' or artist. The only difference between nature and the human artist is that nature herself makes something out of her own materials, while the human artist makes something out of something else, some materials outside himself, to which he is an external arche." If the Christian should object that "Poems are made by fools like me, / But only God can make a tree," Aristotle would answer: "There is a sense in which that is obviously true. But there is a deeper sense in which God or nature and I are just alike: we are both artists. And when I make a poem, God or nature is making it, just as much as when he--or she--is making a tree, only through different agents: through me, and not through the wind, the sun and the rain."[2]

[1]Gerald F. Else, Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 1-2.

[2]John H. Randall, Jr., Aristotle (New York, 1960), pp. 274-275. The "quotation" from Aristotle is Randall's conjecture. It is perhaps relevant to note here that the ancient Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, uses forms of ποιέω in its rendering of the Genesis account of Creation, as does the New Testament when it refers to God as Creator (see e.g., the Greek of Acts 4:24 or Romans 1:20).

The notion that as God created the universe so the poet creates a little "world" became an aesthetic commonplace during the Renaissance, though (ironically) it appeared among followers of Plato rather than disciples of Aristotle. J. E. Spingarn mentions Scaliger, Tasso, and Sidney in this connection.[3] The idea was echoed by Shaftesbury, who called the poet "a second Maker; a just Prometheus, under Jove. Like that Sovereign Artist or universal Plastick Nature, he forms a Whole, coherent and proportion'd in it-self, with due Subjection and Subordinacy of constituent Parts."[4] Later it became important among German writers and was then introduced into modern criticism by Coleridge, in whose work German ideas sometimes appear verbatim. In Chapter XIII of the Biographia Literaria he writes of the primary imagination that it is "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and . . . a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM."[5] It is agreed that Coleridge is echoing the German romantics, but his specific source is variously given as Herder,

[3]A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, 2nd ed. (New York, 1908), pp. 157-158.

[4]Anthony [Ashley Cooper, Third] Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, 5th ed. (Birmingham, 1773), I, 207.

[5]Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, ed. John Shawcross (London, 1907), I, 202.

Schelling, and Kant.[6]

Moving now to the modern Christian Critics, we see that the idea of creation is carried even further by the Dutch scholar Gerardus van der Leeuw in Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art, a little-known but encyclopedic book which is rich in insights for the investigator of the relation between religion and art. Van der Leeuw traces the evolution of the arts from the dance, which was the primitive cultic act which included the elements of all the later art forms (drama, the holy play; the pictorial and rhetorical arts, the holy image; architecture,

[6]William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, in their Literary Criticism: A Short History trace this passage back through Herder to Shaftesbury's Moralists (p. 374, n. 8). Wellek cites Schelling as the source of much of Chapters XII and XIII of the Biographia; see A History of Modern Criticism, II, 152. D. G. James claims that Coleridge, following Kant, held that "the imagination is creative in ordinary perception; for it is primarily due to its activity that what is given as sensation is synthesized together into wholes, so that we become aware of objects interacting and thereby themselves unified into larger." The secondary imagination, which Coleridge describes as an "echo" of the primary imagination, then breaks down the perceptions synthesized from the ordinary world to build up an artistic world (Scepticism and Poetry: An Essay on the Poetic Imagination [London, 1937], p. 24). According to Basil Willey Coleridge is reacting against the associationism of Locke and Hartley which treated the mind as a passive receptor of external phenomena. In 1801 Coleridge wrote: "If the mind be not passive, if it be indeed made in God's Image, and that, too, in the sublimest sense, the Image of the Creator, there is ground for suspicion that any system built on the passiveness of the mind must be false, as a system" (quoted in Willey's Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy [London, 1947], p. 3).

the house of God; music, holy sound). These later art forms subsequently separated and became secularized, and the modern critic is faced with the task of reestablishing the validity of "theological aesthetics." In van der Leeuw's attempt to do this he remarks that Shaftesbury was correct in claiming that art is a creation, a second world:

> Since Shaftesbury, the poet has been compared to God, or at least to Prometheus," . . . under Jupiter. Like that highest artist or universal creative nature, he forms a whole, completely coherent and in itself well formed, with proper order and articulation of its parts."
>
> Conversely, God is a genius. The Enlightenment and the Age of Genius are right, put in another way than they thought. The artist creates figures, but if he really succeeds, if his work is more than a "work," if it becomes a living creation, then it is not the "creative genius" which accomplishes this miracle, but the creator himself. And the artist is not the proud hero, . . . but the humble servant, who with bated breath and trembling excitement recognizes in the work of his hands the image of God.[7]

This is true because though art arises out of the experience of the artist, it becomes something else:

> A poem is not a piece of experience, even if it stands in a particular relationship to experience. It is rather a world newly constructed on the basis of the experience. Out of experience, drenched with emotion, which even here is the womb of creation, a series of images must loose itself, viewed completely objectively; one's own character must transmigrate into completely alien figures, which obey a different law; the event must be completely removed from one's personal destiny. The transformation of subjective dependence into objective form is the true secret of the genuine poetic gift.[8]

[7]Trans. David E. Green; preface by Mircea Eliade (New York, 1963), pp. 286-287. He gives credit here to Oskar F. Walzel, Das Prometheussymbol von Shaftesbury zu Goethe (Munich, 1932).

[8]Van der Leeuw, pp. 280-281.

The independence of art from experience is, in fact, what binds it to religion. Both art and religion involve distancing from experience: art is objectified in form; religion is encounter with the Holy, confrontation with the "Wholly Other," the "Ultimate," which evokes in man awe, dread, and the feeling of smallness.[9] The difference between art and religion is that art has as its "goal of perfection" finite form; whereas to living religion, form (myth, ritual, dogma) is disobedience and sin.[10]

Van der Leeuw also views poetic creation from a strictly Christian vantage point, where it is not "a stationary bringing-into-being, but a pledging of one's life for what is created." To the Christian, God created the world out of love, which fact is corroborated by the gift of Christ to the world. Similarly, every artist can testify that "love is the element in which one's own life and the work of art are united." The artist forgets himself, loses himself in the subject of his work in an attitude which is analogous to religious service and sacrifice.[11]

[9]Van der Leeuw here is indebted to Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy (London, 1923) and Eduard Spranger, Types of Men: The Psychology and Ethics of Personality, trans. Paul J. W. Pigors (Halle, 1928).

[10]Van der Leeuw, p. 285. Cf. Tillich's "Protestant Principle," above.

[11]Van der Leeuw, p. 280. Cf. T. S. Eliot's theory of creative "depersonalization" discussed in Chapter One. Cf. Also Berdyaev's assertion that "creative genius is not concerned with salvation or perdition. In his creative work the artist forgets about himself, about his own personality, and renounces himself. Creative work is intensely personal and at the same time it means forgetfulness of self. Creative activity always involves sacrifice" (The Destiny of

The doctrine of Creation, understood in the light of the Russian Orthodox tradition, plays an important part in the thinking of Nicolas Berdyaev, the most well-known modern exponent of Eastern Orthodoxy. Berdyaev's philosophy is strongly eschatological--in the sense that he looks towards an increase of freedom which will liberate man from bondage in the world. Creativity is the assertion of this freedom; it is not "mastery over the medium, or the creative product itself; rather it is a flight into the infinite; not an activity which objectifies in the finite but one which transcends the finite towards the infinite. The creative act signifies an ek-stasis, a breaking through to eternity."[12] But in this world, what often is the result of the creative impulse are cultural expressions such as art works; thus there is a tragic disparity between creativity and art, which are of two worlds.[13]

Man, trans. Natalie Duddington, 2nd ed. [London, 1945], p. 130). But creativeness is not directly moral, Berdyaev warns: the creator does not, as creator, feel humility or a sense of sin; in short, the self-sacrifice of creative genius is not directed towards moral improvement or salvation, though it is necessary for God's work in the world. See below for a fuller exposition of the idea of creativeness.

[12]Dream and Reality, trans. Katherine Lampert (London, 1950), p. 209.

[13]Berdyaev is dualistic, and at times openly admits his sympathy with the Gnostics and Manicheans, early Christian heretics who believed that salvation meant escape from an essentially evil world which is a prison-house for the soul.

Creativity, in fact, is the subject of an entire book by Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, which was written to give man hope that he will transcend the pessimism and skepticism of the present age.[14] It was also written to controvert the usual attitude of dead orthodox theology (found in both East and West) that creativity is sinful, that in the original creative act the divine Creator exhausted his creation and established "absolute quiet and submission." In this view it was only with the fall of man that the stasis was broken, that the dynamic re-entered the universe; the end of redemption is to conquer sin and restore the original state of rest. Berdyaev's view is exactly the opposite: "Createdness bears the image and likeness of the Creator, i.e. in createdness itself there are creators. Created nature would be something opposed to creative nature, if in the created there was not evident the image and likeness of the Creator; it is creative nature."[15] The Creator gives man free creative power, and calls upon his creature to continue his "seven days" of Creation.

The notion of creativity is never systematically defined by Berdyaev,[16]

[14]Trans. Donald A. Lowrie (New York, 1955). Originally finished in 1914.

[15]Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, p. 129.

[16]He is not reluctant to admit this: "I have been much criticized for my carelessness and apparent incapacity for thoroughgoing philosophical analysis. I accept this criticism, since I am aware that the discursive and deductive processes of reasoning give place in my mind to sudden and disturbing visions. The thoughts to which I attach greatest importance came to me like flashes of lightning, like instantaneous illuminations" (Dream and Reality, p. 219).

and in his autobiography, written late in life, he asserts that it is not merely one aspect of his outlook but a basis for all his thought and life.[17] He does, however, make a specific connection between creation in a theological sense and art when he writes, in an earlier work, that "artistic creativeness best reveals the meaning of the creative act. Art is primarily a creative sphere. It is even an accepted expression to call the creative element in all spheres of spiritual activity 'artistic.' A clearly creative attitude towards science, social life, philosophy or morals, we consider artistic. And even the Creator of the world is considered in the aspect of the great artist." Is there, then, a distinction, he asks, between divine and human creativity? Is the artist completely like the Creator? No; for living being, personality, is created only by God, and any attempt by the artist to create living being results only in dead automata.[18] Furthermore, human creativity, though it is always "a growth, an addition, the making of something new that had not existed in the world before," takes as its materials the world created by God. Man is said to create ex nihilo only in the sense that "in every creative conception there is an element of primeval freedom, fathomless, undetermined by anything, not proceeding from God but ascending towards God. God's call is addressed to that abyss of freedom, and

[17]Berdyaev, Dream and Reality, p. 207.

[18]Berdyaev, Creative Act, pp. 225, 142.

the answer must come from it."[19] But these limits allow no excuse for the old religious orthodoxy which suspects and condemns creative experience. For the artist is expressing no less than the essential direction and purpose of the universe, which is to pass beyond the present finitude (and the religion appropriate to it, which views man as a sinner needing redemption) to "cosmic beauty . . . another kind of being, a higher being which is in process of creation." At present, beauty is only accessible symbolically, but then, cries Berdyaev ecstatically, "the realistic grasp of essential beauty, without the intermediary symbol will be the beginning of the transfiguration of this world, of a new heaven and a new earth. Then there will be no art, or aesthetic experience either, in the strict sense of the word, aesthetic experience in which final being is made evident by means of symbols. The way to beauty as being, to the cosmos, to the new heaven and the new earth, is a religious-creative way."[20] Later he will admit

[19]Berdyaev, The Destiny of Man, pp. 126, 128. According to David Baily Harned, Berdyaev sees the realm of primeval freedom, the Gottheit or Ungrund (terms borrowed from the medieval mystics Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme), to be outside God and the source of man's freedom. Thus "man's freedom cannot be called the gift of the Creator. Like divine freedom, it evolves from the Ungrund; its powers for creation and destruction are neither controlled nor wholly known by God. He calls man to engage in the transfiguration of the tragic potentialities of this primordial freedom and in the creation of the greatest possible meaning and value. But he cannot coerce. Man is his partner, not his pawn" (Theology and the Arts, p. 83).

[20]Berdyaev, Creative Act, p. 246. His concept of symbolism will be discussed in Chapter Four.

that his confident expectation of a new historical age of creativity was shattered by the Russian revolution and succeeding upheavals in Europe. This is not to say that his hope disappeared: the transfiguration of the world became for him "the true, though unattainable goal of creativity"--only tragically hinted at by the specific aesthetic objects (a book, a picture, a symphony) which are fragmentary symbols of the new life.

As a footnote to the discussion of the creative process in the light of the Creation, it might be noted that the artistic impulse in man has been related to the Genesis story of Adam being given by God powers over the universe. Among these powers was the ability to name the creatures. According to van der Leeuw naming by a word involves the calling forth of an image; this word is "mythos, that is, word and image together. It creates an existence by placing one before our eyes." Objects are thus subjugated through the speaking of a word, and a new world is created for man.[21] Human language is therefore initially an effort to comprehend the world, and to bind it within human

[21]Van der Leeuw, Sacred and Profane Beauty, p. 290. Roy W. Battenhouse makes nearly the same point when he writes that "good" poetry necessitates an accurate vision by which the poet perceives the complexity of his experience and integrates it into "a larger body of myth." In biblical terms, the poet "should be able, like Adam in the Garden, to name every creature correctly. Apprehending the form of each thing that is brought before him, he should be able to assign it its proper place." But Battenhouse goes on to say that this accuracy is rare among poets because they, like other men, have lost the original Adamic innocence and need the restorative power of the Christian myth to afford them the proper perspective ("The Relation of Theology to Literary Criticism," Journal of Bible and Religion, XIII [February 1945], 20).

understanding.[22] In this connection it is significant that words in formulaic pattern, rhythm, pitch, and order are more potent for this purpose to the primitive mind than what we would call prose; as a result language was originally poetic.

Van der Leeuw's remarks grow out of his research into cultural anthropology, but the relevance today of this kind of theory has been questioned. Delmore Schwartz says that the power to name might have been available "in idyllic and primitive periods" but that the modern poet must resist the misuse and commercialization of language. Schwartz also observes, however, that the poet's acute consciousness of words brings about a strong sensitivity to new levels of meaning which emerge when the older semantic exactness is blurred: thus the misuse is fruitful for the modern poet as well as destructive.[23]

[22]The famous philosopher of culture Ernst Cassirer advances a similar theory, stating that "humanity really attains its insight into objective reality only through the medium of its own activity and the progressive differentiation of that activity; before man thinks in terms of logical concepts, he holds his experiences by means of clear, separate, mythical images." Language performs a comparable pre-logical function, for "the limits of things must first be posited, the outlines drawn, by the agency of language; and this is accomplished as man's activity becomes internally organized, and his conception of Being acquires a correspondingly clear and definite pattern" (Language and Myth, trans. Susanne Langer [New York, 1946], p. 37).

[23]"The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World," Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, p. 61.

Does not this suggest what Schwartz does not seem to mention--that the modern poet is still able to "subjugate" new areas of reality with new words, new names?

Jacques Maritain also objects to the concept of the poet as namer. Poetic knowledge, for him, is "not ordered towards seizing essences" but rather towards expressing the subjectivity of the poet as it is "in active communication with the world." This is because "the poet is not a hierarch who 'calls all things to existence by giving to each thing its proper and everlasting name,' that is to say by knowing it (prophetically) in its essence; he is rather a child who names things by calling them affectionate names, and who makes a paradise with them. They tell him their names only in an enigma, he enters into their games, blindfolded, he plays with them at life and death."[24]

The Doctrine of the Incarnation

Also important to Christian Criticism (though not unrelated to the idea of Creation) is the doctrine of the Incarnation. Given the significance of the Incarnation in Anglican theology,[25] and to Roman Catholic thought, one would expect Christian Critics from these traditions to explore its relevance to art and literature; but the fact is

[24]"The Experience of the Poet," The Situation of Poetry, Jacques and Raissa Maritain, trans. Marshall Suther (New York, 1955), pp. 77-79.

[25]See the discussion of Anglican Incarnationalism in Chapter One.

that the Incarnation looms large among Protestant critics as well.[26]

A long and detailed discussion of "The Incarnation and Art" by E. J. Tinsley[27] points out that both the Incarnation and Art are methods of communication. Quoting St. Augustine, who said that "The Word is, in a way, the art of Almighty God," Tinsley advances the thesis that the New Testament itself provides evidence for the analogical relationship between the Incarnation and art. Jesus is presented as the unique eikon or image of the Father, having the form of ultimate significance; furthermore, the Christian life is a process of being conformed to this image through the action of the Holy Spirit in grace. Thus the Incarnation is not only important as a fact; it is also significant as the method which God chose to communicate himself. Now the Incarnation is more like the method of art than of philosophical or scientific statement. Here, as in art, form and content are inseparable, and a variety

[26]And not only in Christian Criticism as such. William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, in the epilogue to Literary Criticism: A Short History, also look to the Incarnation: "The writers of the present history have not been concerned to implicate literary theory with any kind of religious doctrine. It appears to us, however, relevant, as we near our conclusion, at least to confess an opinion that the kind of literary theory which seems to us to emerge from the long history of the debates is far more difficult to orient within any of the Platonic or Gnostic ideal world views, or within the Manichaean full dualism and strife of principles, than precisely within the vision of suffering, the optimism, the mystery which are embraced in the religious dogma of the Incarnation" (p. 746).

[27]The Church and the Arts, ed. Frank J. Glendenning (London, 1960).

of response is possible to the one form, Christ. In the early Gospels (Mark, Matthew) Jesus seems deliberately to make himself and his mission mysterious and enigmatic, using images, metaphors, and signs rather than proclaiming himself openly and ostentatiously.[28] Like the dramatic poet, Jesus acted out his mission.[29]

A somewhat different approach is taken by the famous Shakespearean critic G. Wilson Knight, who has written a book based on his own intuitions regarding literature and religion, The Christian Renaissance. In it he takes note, as several others have done, that the New Testament is in

[28]These are not new ideas. Spingarn, in his Literary Criticism of the Renaissance, states that both Petrarch and Boccaccio argue that "theology itself is a form of poetry--the poetry of God. Both of them insist that the Bible is essentially poetical, and that Christ himself spoke largely in poetical images." Spingarn continues by emphasizing that this last point is much stressed by Renaissance critics (pp. 8-9).

[29]W. H. Auden uses this "hiddenness" of Christ to argue that no Christian can feel comfortable as an artist. The artistic impulse is expressive, and tends towards manifestation; but the coming of Christ, paradoxically, is hidden except to faith, which is not generated by imagination but by grace. Auden writes that "the Incarnation, the coming of Christ in the form of a servant who cannot be recognized by the eye of flesh and blood, but only by the eye of faith, puts an end to all claims of the imagination to be the faculty which decides what is truly sacred and what is profane. A pagan god can appear on earth in disguise but, so long as he wears his disguise, no man is expected to recognize nor can. But Christ appears looking just like any other man, yet claims that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and that no man can come to God the Father except through Him. The contradiction between the profane appearance and the sacred assertion is impassible to the imagination" (The Dyer's Hand, p. 457). This is essentially a Kierkegaardian-Barthian argument and seems incongruous coming from a convert to Anglicanism who is also a practicing artist in words.

its own right an art form, the symbolic incarnation or blending by the Divine Artist of supra-historical truth with the world of history. The Incarnation has other dimensions as well; not only is the New Testament an art-form created by the Divine Poet, but its central figure, Jesus, also corresponds to the art-form of the artist: "He is in himself the incarnation the poet accomplishes in art. He creates in his imagination his own poetry and then acts it, making himself protagonist in his own drama."[30]

Other critics, too, have commented on the dramatic implications of the Incarnation. True religion has never been primarily a matter of theoretical propositions, asserts Leicester Bradner in Incarnation in Religion and Literature. God's dealing with His people in the Old Testament was in terms of specific situations which involved the action of God and human response: Moses and the burning bush, the Exodus, the deliverance of the Law, the stories of David, the tales of the prophets. The coming of Christ is for the Christian the culmination of this principle: Jesus did not come to preach a new law but to act out the love of God through dramatic example. The New Testament is, moreover, replete with dramatic elements. Scenes in the life of Christ exemplify his teachings (e.g. the encounter with the rich young ruler, and with the tax collector Zacchaeus; the feeding of the five thousand, and the blessing of the little children), and he presents his message

[30] 2nd ed. (New York, 1962), pp. 49, 53, 52.

largely by parables which are immediate, vivid, and imaginative.[31] Furthermore, the Gospels through which we are given the story of Jesus can be seen as dramatic in form. St. Mark presents a human, sympathetic Jesus; his Gospel is comparable to a miracle play, and could be acted out in a pantomime which emphasizes the various human emotions such as awe, joy, and compassion. St. Matthew's Gospel is structured around Jesus as supernatural judge and king who elicits fear; the story is much more stylized, like a morality play. St. Luke's story is more natural and spontaneous and immediate than the other Synoptics; it stresses the love of Jesus and the gratitude of those who are healed and forgiven by him.[32]

Another critic who emphasizes the indirection and enigma of the Incarnation is van der Leeuw, who writes from a neo-Calvinist viewpoint and is able, surprisingly enough, to attempt a Christian aesthetic which draws on Barthian theology. With Barth, van der Leeuw emphasizes that we cannot speak of the goodness of creation or of human experience, because man has fallen and the "image of God" in which he was created has been lost. For the Christian there is only the "new creation," in

[31] New York, 1957, pp. 7-8.

[32] Sallie M. TeSelle, Literature and the Christian Life (New Haven, 1966), pp. 158-159. Bradner also analyzes the literary structure of St. Luke's Gospel briefly, but a much more detailed approach to the Gospels has come to be associated with the British theologian Austin Farrer, whose studies of imagery resemble the American New Criticism. See below, Chapter Four.

which the image of God appears again, not in "form nor glory" but "emptied into the man of sorrows." Therefore it is only through faith, not metaphysical speculation, that we can hold fast to the image of God: "We cannot command it, we cannot hold it. We can only share in it when we share in the image of God among us, in God in the image of man, in Jesus Christ, who emptied himself and took on the form of a servant." Nature, or human nature as such, is not the image of God, but God has "set up his image among us in the form of the crucified." We have this form, of death and humiliation; but we have also "the form of resurrected life and of glory." Thus van der Leeuw arrives at a theological basis for his aesthetic: "The doctrine of the image of God includes the entire theological aesthetics or aesthetical theology. In the form of the crucified, humiliated and the problematic, yet eternally worthy of worship, lies a judgment, but at the same time also a justification, for all human attempts at creating form. In his triumph lies also the possibility of the miracle which we can never attain, but which is given us as grace: the expression of the holy through the beautiful." Because of this Christological base, he is able to conclude his book with confidence: "It can and must be possible to praise the whole variety of the human world, the glorious multitude of forms of art and religion as revelation of the glory of God, if God himself gave himself to this human world, himself assumed form and moved as man among men. The Incarnation means our redemption, also in the sense that the world and our works in it need not be without meaning, but can be

bearers of a divine revelation."[33]

Here van der Leeuw touches on a major theme among Christian Critics: the Incarnation as the means by which creation--the natural world, concrete human experience--is seen to be good, and of ultimate significance. It is particularly important to establish the goodness of the world of sense, of things, because, as Nathan A. Scott, Jr. points out, there has been a rejection of the world by poets during the past century or so. Citing Allen Tate's essay "The Symbolic Imagination," Scott asserts that the poet "has got to do with the body of this world."[34] Instead, the poet has suffered from the post-Cartesian split between the subjective and the objective, and has shown contempt for finite existence in his pursuit of the infinite "clear and distinct idea"; following Maritain and Tate, Scott labels this tendency angelism.[35] Angelism has evidenced itself (1) in mystical gnosis, by which modern poets, from the French Surrealists to Dylan Thomas and Hart Crane, have turned away from the created order in an attempt to directly perceive the Absolute or to create la poésie pure, self-sufficient and underived. (2) The second characteristic of angelism is the abandonment of the mimetic principle; there is thus no perception of the

[33]Van der Leeuw, pp. 324-325, 327, 339-340.

[34]Quoted p. 51 Modern Literature and Religious Frontier.

[35]Scott, Modern Literature and Religious Frontier, p. 55. He also mentions Tate's "The Angelic Imagination: Poe as God" and Maritain's The Dream of Descartes.

world but only of the consciousness of the perceiver. (3) The most radical angelism is evident in such Existentialists as Sartre, who reduce life to an utterly absurd state of fragmentation and disintegration producing only despair and disgust.

In the face of such a trend, it is the task of the Christian Critic to assert once more that literature has to do with finitude, with creation; that the poet is "to glory in our human infirmities and to turn once again to the finite with a sense of wonder and expectancy and with love and a proper adoration." Here Scott brings to bear the philosophical theology of Paul Tillich in order to say to the poet that his dissatisfaction with the finite, inasmuch as it is a yearning for the infinite depth of meaning, itself implies a certain awareness of what Tillich calls the Ground of Being, an awareness ("the condition of being grasped by the power of Being-itself") which Tillich identifies as faith.[36] For the Christian, the Ground of Being is most clearly revealed in the New Being manifested by the New Testament picture of Jesus the Christ. The Incarnation is therefore the prime example of finitude participating in the Unconditional: here the literary imagination possesses the model for piercing to the Ultimate through the depth of existence.

What is only suggested by Scott as a Christian answer to angelism is spelled out by the Jesuit writer William Lynch. Like Scott, Lynch

[36]Scott, Modern Literature and Religious Frontier, pp. 61-62.

is concerned about various stratagems by which the finite is denied by the imagination: it can scorn creation in favor of a transcendent infinity, or by turning inwards to the self (an example is the "psychologism" practiced by I. A. Richards). It can touch human experience only to recoil in disgust, or it can deny the possibility of a leap into the infinite but at the same time regard the finite as meaningless or absurd.[37] Lynch's own position, on the other hand, is that the infinite (beauty, truth, God) must be approached through a descent into finitude, through the limited and the definite. The model for this descent is the Incarnation:

> Christianity has from the beginning demanded that the search for redemption and the infinite be through the finite, through the limited, through the human. We are, unfortunately, too used to a sublime but rather facile statement of the meaning of the Incarnation--as if, by taking flesh, the God-Man had placed a holy but nevertheless single and once-for-all and done-with seal upon the finite. Actually, the mysteries of Christ, His birth, death and resurrection, and all the mysteries that intervene between these, are the Mysteries of man which He enters into as a way and in complete depth.[38]

When Lynch approaches the problem of how ideas or meaning get into the literary work, he sees similar aberrant tendencies: there is, at one extreme, the "univocal" imagination which reduces or destroys all

[37] Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination (New York, 1960), pp. 8-12.

[38] "Theology and the Imagination," Thought, XXIX (Spring 1954), 71.

variety and detail for the sake of unity.[39] Lynch illustrates the univocal pattern from Dr. Rieux in Camus' The Plague, from Scobie in Graham Greene's The Heart of the Matter, and from Kierkegaard's "aesthetic man." At the other extreme is the "equivocal" imagination, which sees only difference and variety; thus everything is diverse, private, and unrelated to everything else: the example is Andre Gide's acte gratuit, absolute availability for every novel adventure to the exclusion of all previous experience or commitment. Between these two extremes is the "analogical" imagination, which "insists on keeping the same and the different, the idea and the detail, tightly interlocked in the one imaginative act. As its idea or pattern descends into the images of reality, it adapts itself perfectly to every detail or difference, without ever suffering the loss of its own identity. And the theme is always on the inside of the images. It is always eminently positive and is always creating difference and autonomy." Again Lynch's model is Christological: in Christ the contraries, the One and the Many, are reconciled. The historically unique and differentiated Christ is mysteriously united with the ultimate society of the Church, and this identity of the concrete and the universal is the warrant for

[39]The "theological" imagination is often thought of as disrespectful of reality and anxious to exploit it for the sake of doctrine, but when this is true the "univocal" imagination is at work (Christ and Apollo, p. 113).

the analogical imagination.[40]

Thus, reasons Lynch, it cannot be said, as many modern critics claim, that the imagination is absolutely independent of metaphysics or theology; la poésie pure is a chimera, and if complete autonomy is insisted on, the dissociation characteristic of the equivocal imagination will result. How, though, is literature to be approached without running the risk of univocal dogmatizing which sacrifices the specifics of the poem to an absolute truth? Here Lynch would apply the method of medieval biblical exegesis, which dealt with four levels of meaning: the literal, the allegorical, the anagogical, and the tropological. The integrity of the concrete image is maintained, while at the same time if the text is examined in depth it is seen to participate in the dimensions of the universal. The application of the

[40]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, pp. 113, 158. Hugh McCarron, S.J. in Realization: A Philosophy of Poetry (New York, 1937) attempts a similar comparison between the diversity and unity of poetry and the diversity and unity of the Godhead. The poet, he contends, "has some faint perception of kinship with all things, and of the fact that all other things are kindred amongst themselves suffering a faint nostalgia . . . . The whole mystery of affection, in a universe that is vestige and shadow, mirroring the Triune God, Who is Love, the mystery of hate and ill, cannot exist save in kindred, save in beings that can know, feel and possess each other" (p. 72). The poet also has a sense of the distinctness and individuality of things; this is parallel to the recognition that Christ had to be a distinct individual human being, incarnated and crucified for us individual men. But Christ is more than this: He is the Second Person of the triune unity of the Godhead. He is thus the union of the individual and the one (p. 80).

fourfold method of exegesis moves Lynch finally to speculate that there is, besides the partial and inadequate attitudes he has discussed, a "Christian" imagination. In analogy, as we have seen, the "act of existence" descends "into every created form and possibility, adapting itself to every shape and form and difference." But the Incarnation is a new creation, "within which the one, single, narrow form of Christ of Nazareth is in process of giving its shape to everything[.] To think and imagine according to this form is to think and imagine according to a "Christic" dimension. It would also make every dimension Christic. However, like analogy itself, this would not destroy difference but would make it emerge even more sharply."[41] He has worked out, in the structure of Roman Catholic theology (though he leans more towards the Platonic than the Aristotelian), a strategy similar to the one worked out by Nathan Scott from Tillich's theology. And he provides, I think, the most impressive contribution by a Christian Critic to the discussion of the "concrete universal,"[42] and an impressive argument against those who feel that religion is somehow alien to literature and prone to exploit it.

Lynch has not gone unpraised. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. quotes him at length in his discussion of Tillich.[43] Paul Elman, in an essay

[41]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, pp. 116-117, 187.

[42]See the essay on this subject by W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. in The Verbal Icon (Lexington, Ky., 1954).

[43]Scott, Modern Literature and Religious Frontier, p. 63.

subtitled "Reality in Contemporary Fiction,"[44] also defends the Christian against otherworldliness, citing Tillich and Lynch as well as Erich Auerbach's monumental study Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature[45]--all examples of criticism which holds that the Incarnation validates concrete existence.[46] And even Sallie M. TeSelle, who usually has little praise for Christian Critics, has kind words for Lynch as a theological theorist, though she disparages his practical criticism of literature. Her own approach is not basically theoretical in orientation, though like Incarnational criticism, it insists on the concreteness of literature. Her perspective is somewhat more pragmatic: literature is valuable as it offers the Christian, "who is called upon to adhere totally to God in spite of the negative powers that appear to rule the world, an understanding of the depth and breadth of powers

[44]The title is "Twice-Blessed Enamel Flowers" (an allusion to J. D. Salinger's short story "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period," in which the protagonist, after living in a fanciful romantic dream world, comes to a grateful appreciation of the natural world). The essay is in The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature.

[45]Trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N. J., 1953).

[46]One of Auerbach's main theses is that for the ancient Greeks and Romans serious literature eschewed the commonplaces and specifics of life, which were relegated to comedy and farce. But it was the Hebrew-Christian tradition (the Prophets and the Christ were common men, but the ordinariness and concreteness of their lives were ultimately significant), which came to the fore in the Middle Ages, that lay behind modern realistic literature and allowed seriousness, tragedy, and spiritual depth to the everyday and the common.

that his response must embrace if it is to be realistic." This is not the "program" of literature, which does not need any concerns beyond its own excellence; it is in the will of the individual that this appropriation of literature takes place. The function of literature is for TeSelle pre-ethical: literature is to provide information in depth for the disciple of Christ, to help him to know preparatory to doing. What counts finally is the doing, not the knowing, and Kierkegaard's warnings against aestheticism are repeated. Unlike Auden, though, TeSelle will not go as far as Kierkegaard, for Kierkegaard (like the poets and critics possessed of the "angelic imagination," despite the fact that the similarity is not mentioned by TeSelle) is completely otherworldly, demanding only the response of immediate and total obedience from the Christian while disregarding his circumstances. She insists that the Christian life is "such a mundane, concrete, contemporary business that only an intimate acquaintance with the situation in which we are to do this living out can give us the equipment for a realistic and profound response."[47]

The Doctrine of the Trinity

The foregoing critics drew upon the theology of the Divine Father and the Incarnation of the Divine Son--the first two Persons of the Trinity. But at least two writers have as their model the Trinity itself,

[47]TeSelle, Literature and the Christian Life, pp. 114-115.

which includes as well the Person of the Holy Spirit--the three Persons being mystically One God.

Several times in The Meaning of the Creative Act Nicolas Berdyaev links the three "ages" or levels of man's consciousness of God to the Persons of the Trinity. The Old Testament, the age of Law, is identified with God as King, Ruler, Judge--unapproachable and fearsome, before whom man trembled in the dust. The New Testament is the age of Redemption: now man is not only acutely aware of his sinfulness; he sees salvation made possible for him by the grace of a loving Father expressed in the sacrifice of his Son. But redemption never removes man from the position of humble repentance towards the God he has disobeyed. In the realm of obedience, any impulse to creative self-assertion is branded as prideful. This is because orthodox theology, both East and West, has failed to draw adequate anthropological conclusions from the Incarnation, having ignored the meaning of the Holy Spirit and the eschatological promise of the Second Coming.

The New Testament Incarnation of Christ the Logos means that no longer can creativity in the universe be seen solely as the work of the Creator-God; it is now apparent that creation is also of the Son.[48]

[48]Berdyaev has in mind the Prologue to St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word [Logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (1:1-4 [R.S.V.]).

Unlike many theologians in the West, Berdyaev does not see Christ only as a sojourner among fallen men but as the God-man, through whom man's initial perfection is restored so that now, in some sense, man participates once more in the perfection of the God-head. Furthermore, God's creativity to Berdyaev is not limited to the "seven days" of Genesis but is evident in the Incarnation as well. The Incarnation implies the lifting up of man to God-head as well as the condescension of divinity to humanity: Christ is the Absolute Man, the Divine Man representing the entire human race before God, and his triumph is the triumph of all men in him. Human creativity is now seen in connection with the divine creativity, and Berdyaev rejoices that "the process of the world's creation passes through all the hypostases of the Trinity. The world-process is being completed in the Trinity. Hence everything earthly is completed in heaven. The mystery of creation cannot be revealed in the creative work of God the Father alone. In the consciousness of Christ's incarnation, as a continuation of the creation, there is already implicit man's creative role in the world. It is revealed in God the Son and God the Spirit that God continues His work of creation together with man and his free powers."[49]

For centuries the orthodox theologies of East and West have held man to a passive response to the redemption; however, in the nineteenth

[49]Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, p. 138.

and twentieth centuries man has been casting off his former servility and asserting himself. Still theology has clung to the past, leaving man to pervert and destroy himself in the cultural and metaphysical crises of our times with such aberrations as scientism, rationalism, and Marxism. What Berdyaev is attempting to do is devise a theology for the present. In The Meaning of the Creative Act he is filled with hope; he is able to proclaim: "Creativeness is the final revelation of the Holy Trinity--its anthropological revelation. This is a consciousness which has never existed in the world--it is being born in our epoch." Creativeness is the third era of revelation, surpassing the eras of Law and Redemption; it is of the Spirit, and is without external authority or Scripture. And whereas the Law and Redemption were initiated from above, the anthropological revelation will be from man to God. "This world," which weighs down and imprisons, will pass away--this is the Coming of Christ in glory, the Second Coming. As a result the gap between the making of aesthetic and cultural objects and creativeness will be transcended; "creativity will pass over to cosmic perfection in which man's perfection and the perfection of what he creates will become one,"[50] and man will be reborn to a new realm of divine power. This book, written in Moscow before World War I, now seems dated, especially in its lyric prophesying of the "Christian Renaissance," the new age of creativity. But in his

[50]Berdyeav, Creative Act, pp. 110, 99, 323.

outline of his final philosophical outlook he still stresses the apocalyptic hope that the human spirit will transcend the ghastly inhumanity of the present time, though he looks for the victory not in a new age of chronological time but in what he calls "existential time," eternity out of time.[51]

The trinitarian doctrine for Berdyaev has historical and cosmic implications in relation to creativity defined in the broadest sense. But the Trinity also appears as the model for an analysis of poetic creativity as a psychological process in The Mind of the Maker[52] by a British medievalist, playwright, and mystery writer, Dorothy L. Sayers. Unlike Berdyaev, who was often condemned as a heretic by his fellow Orthodox and viewed with suspicion by Western Catholics and Protestants, she was an Anglo-Catholic of impeccable orthodoxy. The basis for her discussion is the familiar analogy between the Divine Creator and the human creative artist. But unlike (say) Coleridge, who looked at creative imagination as a "repetition" of eternal creation, Sayers starts from the blatant anthropomorphism of the Genesis story. All our concepts except possibly the most abstract, like numbers, are necessarily based on our experience. Theological statements about God are therefore analogous to statements about human behavior. We speak of God as "King" and "Father," for instance,

[51]Berdyaev, Dream and Reality, p. 295.

[52]New York, 1941.

extrapolating the best elements of royalty and paternity to express aspects of our relationship to God. Similarly, from our knowledge of the human "maker," we fashion the idea of the Divine Maker. The human maker employs the stuff of the universe of which he is a part in order to fashion something that did not exist previously; the Divine Maker is not a part of the universe (which is his creation), and he creates ex nihilo. But we could not understand Creation even as imperfectly as we do if we had no experience of human creativity.

The fact that theological language is analogous to human experience is helpful for our understanding of two things which have long been mysterious--so mysterious that they have often been dismissed as incomprehensible: the creative imagination in man, and the dogma of the Trinity. The two can throw light on each other: by looking at the creative imagination in the light of the trinitarian formulation, we can more clearly comprehend its workings; and we can also come to appreciate the Trinity as a concept corresponding to what is recognizably true on the human level rather than impossibly befogged theological nonsense about which any respectable modern man should remain permanently ignorant.[53]

[53]A. C. Bridge, Images of God: An Essay on the Life and Death of Symbols (London, 1960), comes to a similarly trinitarian model from the opposite direction. He speaks of the work of art as symbolic, i.e., as the focal point of the "coming together" of the transcendent reality and material thing (p. 24). A third aspect of the "symbolic process" is the observer, who is challenged to respond (the power of challenge has been called the Holy Spirit [see pp. 139-145]. Sayers moves from theology to an understanding of the artistic process; Bridge moves from a schematization of the artistic process to an understanding of the Trinity.

As the germ of her discussion Sayers introduces the trinitarian structure of the imagination with a passage from one of her liturgical plays, The Zeal of Thy House. St. Michael, in his final speech, says:

> For every work [or act] of creation is threefold, an earthly trinity to match the heavenly.
> First, [not in time, but merely in order of enumeration] there is the Creative Idea, passionless, timeless, beholding the whole work complete at once, the end in the beginning: and this is the image of the Father.
> Second, there is the Creative Energy [or Activity] begotten of that idea, working in time from the beginning to the end, with sweat and passion, being incarnate in the bonds of matter: and this is the image of the Word.
> Third, there is the Creative Power, the meaning of the work and its response in the lively soul: and this is the image of the indwelling Spirit.
> And these three are one, each equally in itself the whole work, whereof none can exist without other: and this is the image of the Trinity.[54]

The Idea (the "Father") is the most difficult to grasp, for, like God, it is not directly knowable but, as in the Trinity, ascertainable only as it incarnates itself in the work. In the process of artistic creation the writer refers every word and episode to a pre-existent pattern which thereby becomes conscious. The Idea, like God the Father, is "timeless and without parts or passions, though it is never seen, either by writer or reader, except in terms of time, parts and passion."[55]

The Energy, corresponding to the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, is "the sum and process of all the activity which brings the

[54]Sayers, The Mind of the Maker, pp. 37-38.

[55]Sayers, The Mind of the Maker, pp. 39-40.

book into temporal and spatial existence. 'All things are made by it, and without it nothing is made that has been made.' To it belongs everything that can be included under the word 'passion'--feeling, thought, toil, trouble, difficulty, choice, triumph--all the accidents which attend a manifestation in time . . . of the eternal and immutable Idea." It is profitable for our comprehension of the literary process, Sayers adds, to view the creative Energy (the Logos) from two perspectives. The first is the relation of the creative poet to his work (analogically the relationship of the Creator to his Creation). The poet, like God, is both transcendent and immanent. It is wrong to assert that the poet is merely the sum of his works: this is a kind of artistic pantheism, which tries to reconstruct the author from his work, whereas poetry is likely to be too varied and ambiguous to afford a clear glimpse of its creator. Neither can we say that the poem has no reality apart from the poet's mind; once a poem is created it has a separate reality for the reader (we can, for instance, study the Iliad without knowing the personality of Homer). On the other hand, artistic deism is also wrong, for a poet cannot express a thought or emotion which does not in some way reveal himself, and every character he creates is an incarnation of part of his own personality. This brings us to the second perspective, the relationship of the creator to his created characters. Here the author must avoid two extremes: he must not allow his characters absolute freedom, or coherence of the work as a whole may be destroyed (Mr. Micawber's

sudden exhibition of efficient detective powers at the end of David Copperfield is an instance of this). Nor must he play the role of autocratic deity and manipulate his characters like puppets, or he will destroy their humanity. Here, in literary terms, is the classic problem of free will and predestination, which ultimately are not contradictory but paradoxically both necessary. Sayers concludes that "neither predestination nor free will is everything, but, if the will acts freely in accordance with its true nature, it achieves by grace and not by judgment the eternal will of its maker, though possibly by a process unlike, and longer than, that which might have been imposed upon it by force."[56]

The third Person of the poet's trinity (analogous to the Holy Spirit) is the Creative Power: "It is the thing which flows back to the writer from his own activity and makes him, as it were, the reader of his own book. It is also, of course, the means by which the Activity is communicated to other readers and which produces a corresponding response in them."[57] Here we have to do with the emotional effect of the poem: its power to call up associations in the mind of the reader, its power to influence his thoughts and behavior.

Finally, as in the Athanasian Creed, "These three are one." Idea, Energy, and Power are intellectually separable but all three are the

[56]Sayers, p. 75.

[57]Sayers, pp. 40-41.

"real" poem. The poet cannot know the Idea except through its realization in Energy, and he knows neither Idea nor Energy except through the Power that goes out from the Idea and Energy and returns to him. In the triune God-head the Persons are both consubstantial and co-equal.[58] But such is not the case with the human artist, who is imperfect and sinful and whose work therefore is liable to be lop-sided. There are, in other words, conscious or unconscious artistic "heretics," whose poetry is liable to show an overemphasis on one of the Persons of the Trinity to the neglect of the others. The authors who are "Father-ridden" will try to "impose the Idea directly upon the mind and senses, believing that this is the whole of the work."[59] The "Son-ridden" poet will produce poems which will be sensuous or witty or flowery but

[58]Cf. René Wellek's consideration of "The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art," in which he argues, on similar grounds, against the theory that a work of literature is the experience of the author and against the theory that it is the experience of the reader. (He also argues against the theories of its being the printed artifact or a sequence of sounds uttered by the reader or speaker). None of these views is adequate in itself, he points out, though each is partially true. Finally he settles for an all-inclusive definition: "The real poem must be conceived as a structure of norms, realized only partially in the actual experience of its many readers. Every single experience (reading, reciting, and so forth) is only an attempt--more or less successful and complete--to grasp this set of norms or standards" (René Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, 2nd ed. [New York, 1956], pp. 138-139).

[59]Sayers, p. 151. This closely resembles the "angelism" of the New Critics and Lynch's "univocal" imagination.

lacking in coherence or a ruling idea.[60] The "Ghost-ridden" poet will strive for emotional effect without either coherence or attention to technique. But the more closely Idea, Energy, and Power are co-equal in the writer (as in the Trinity), the better will be the work of literary art.[61]

[60]He possesses what resembles the "equivocal" imagination described by Lynch, but Sayers' explanation seems the more satisfactory of the two. Lynch follows the New Critics in their desire for rich poetic texture; there is some question, however, whether poetry that could be adjudged weak in texture (e.g., much eighteenth-century verse) is therefore bad. Perhaps Lynch's criteria work best for metaphysical or modern poetry but not so well with other styles.

[61]Almost a decade later a much more renowned writer, Denis de Rougement, suggested a very similar trinitarian theory of "the human mysteries of the act of art." What he merely outlined, though, had already been treated in detail by Sayers. De Rougement's proposal appears in his essay "Religion and the Mission of the Artist," Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, pp. 183-185.

CHAPTER FOUR

SACRAMENT, SYMBOL, AND MYTH

Sacramentalism and Criticism

In the previous chapter we saw how important the doctrine of the Incarnation was for Christian Criticism, especially in combatting the tendency to "angelism" and the consequent neglect of the particular. One of the most vigorous exponents of such Incarnationalism is Malcolm Ross, who in his book Poetry and Dogma makes an important connection between the Incarnation and the Christian sacramentalism:

> The fixed star at the centre of the Christian firmament of symbol is the dogma of the Incarnation. In this dogma, respecting as it does both the divinity of the Word and the humanity of the flesh, is contained the whole principle of the Christian aesthetic. Some of the implications of the dogma, for art as well as for life, are certainly these: Though the flesh is frail, and though nature herself has suffered the wound of sin, the Incarnation redeems the flesh and the world, laying nature and the reasonable faculty open once more to the operation of the supernatural. In other words, the Incarnation makes possible, indeed demands, the sacramental vision of reality. The flesh, the world, things, are restored to dignity because they are made valid again. Existence becomes a drama which, no matter how painful it may be, is nevertheless meaningful. And no detail in the drama is without its utterly unique reality. No thing is insignificant . . . . the Christian artist, when he knows what he is about, respects the practical, objective limits of form. He cannot be, as Shelley was, the poet of an

> "unbodied joy." Nor may he seek to break through the illusion of sense experience into a realm of pure essence or even into a realm of pure art-vision, that verbal universe of the seer tricked out as a special kind of reality, sometimes even as the only reality.[1]

The emphasis on the Incarnation as central to the "Christian firmament of symbol" suggests wherein Ross goes beyond the Incarnational theories discussed previously. For him, Incarnation is necessary to "the whole life of Christian symbol in all its reaches," and he goes on specifically to connect it with the Eucharist, "the rite whereby eternally the Word is made flesh." Ross, like William Lynch, stresses the "analogical sense of Christian symbol" which is committed to the order of materiality and time as well as the order of abstracted dogmatic truth. This sense of the analogical is "perpetuated" by the Eucharistic liturgy, which applies the eternal sacrifice of Christ to man within time, and which does not scorn to use the concrete man-made elements of bread and wine in the redemptive process. Thus "the symbolism of the Eucharist confirms the sacramental knowledge of thing and event, assuring to both a proper analogical dignity and worth."[2]

[1]New Brunswick, N. J., 1954, pp. 10-11.

[2]Ross, Poetry and Dogma, p. 27. In much less sophisticated terms and without the historical perspective of Ross's study, Hugh McCarron, S.J. in Realization: A Philosophy of Poetry advances a similar theory of the relationship between poetry and sacrament: "a poem dimly resembles the sacraments in this, that it is also an attempt to portray things, active things in a real way. Moreover, the sacraments are signs. Our words too are signs to symbolize, finally, not a general statement of truth, but rather things in act, in which truth ultimately resides. Thirdly, poetry unites the lower creation, soil, air, rain, plant, animal with truth in man, in God. Christ the Word of God, the Son of Man, does this. His sacraments do it. Poetry in a way far less important than the supernatural sacraments, does it" (p. 84).

However, to Ross the proper analogical validation of the concrete and the temporal is possible only, it would seem, within the context of the Roman Catholic dogma of transubstantiation. He contends that the separation of nature from grace, of history or time from religion, followed upon the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century and has had a detrimental effect on poetry:

> The capacity of the Eucharistic symbol in poetry to function simultaneously at the levels of the natural, the historical, and the divine is threatened and eventually lost in the course of the seventeenth century. In poetry, "The Blood," "The Body," "The Sacrifice," are reduced to metaphor and below metaphor, finally to cliche. "Fact" and "value" disengage and draw apart. A Christian "spiritism" holds itself aloof from the order of things--and event. The course of English poetry is thereby divided. One direction will be that of the utterly secular, under the sign of rationalism and materialism. The other will be that of the romantic idealisms and "psychologisms," the pseudo-sacred as against the real profane.

He charges Luther with a "wholly individualistic and subjective" Eucharistic cult which retained only the rhetorical and ceremonial level of Catholic sacramentalism. Calvin went to the opposite extreme, stressing corporate worship rather than subjective experience but doing away with sacramentalism and reducing the sacramental symbols to "bare figures." Thus he separated divine power from time and from matter and paved the way for the total secularism which has swept over Western culture.[3]

[3]Ross, pp. vii, 53.

The resulting dissociation of sensibility is felt not only in Milton, with whom dogma is subjectivized and made to serve the private ideas of the poet. In the Anglican poets of the seventeenth century as well, dogma and rhetoric are separated: symbol declines into metaphor, poetry dissolves into "bloodless abstraction," and eventually into the "witty generalities" of Alexander Pope. In the last two centuries we have on the one hand the world, nature, which became the provenance of science and naturalism; on the other hand there are "spirit" and "idea" which have become subjectivized and psychologized. As a result there is a "retreat to 'the Paradise Within,' which by the twentieth century was a paradise swarming with serpents. Its symbol is no longer the tree of knowledge but the psychoanalyst's couch." Even Roman Catholicism, where Eucharistic dogma remained theoretically intact, was "forced back on the defensive by the double assault of the Reformation and the new science" and was unable until recently to affirm sacramentalism in the natural or social orders.[4] It is only in the past several decades, in such writers as Bernanos, Auden, and Eliot, that we see artists in the West struggling towards a true Christian sacramentalism in which time and the world are bearers of divine grace.[5]

[4]Ross, pp. 228, 18, 246.

[5]Dostoyevsky, perhaps because Russia was not as badly eroded by Protestantism and secularism, was "the last major Christian artist to possess fully the sacramental knowledge of man alive in a society that moves. Dostoyevsky in The Brothers Karamazov realized symbolically the Christian fact of communion, and he places it in the living core of historical process" (Ross, p. 251).

The tone of Ross's book is extremely polemical and suggests that the writer would not be impressed by the revived interest in sacramentalism and liturgy among Protestants; nor would he be at home among Roman Catholic theologians of the aggiornamento (renewal) movement following Vatican Council II, whose attitude toward the Reformation is much more positive than his,[6] and who often have sought to divest themselves of the rigid categories of Thomism and move from metaphysical parochialism to a new "openness" to the world. It is this openness to the world which Amos N. Wilder, in refuting Ross, contends is more characteristic of Protestantism than traditional Roman Catholicism: "while the Christian will see this culture as requiring in some genuine sense the doctrine of the incarnation, the same is by no means true of the special dogma of transubstantiation. The Catholic insists on the concreteness of a supernatural order of sacrament and symbol, an objective and therefore essentially static world of mediating imagery. A Protestant understanding of grace and nature foregoes such an impressive fixed 'firmament of symbol,' but it retains the advantages--with all the risks--of the immediate Word, free to engage itself without trammels in all the actualities of the world."[7]

[6]See, e.g., Per Erik Persson, "The Reformation in Recent Roman Catholic Theology," New Theology No. 1, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman (New York, 1964), pp. 94-108.

[7]"Christianity and the Arts: The Historic Divorce and the Contemporary Situation," Christian Scholar, XL (December 1957), 265-266.

Very different in tone is "Art and Sacrament" by the Welsh painter and poet David Jones, which, in its latinate scholasticism, is very Roman--though it is not polemical, and indeed is designated "An Enquiry." Jones takes two lines of argument. The first is anthropological: man is by nature homo poeta, whose making is not merely utilitarian (the animals make beautiful things, but their making is entirely functional and transitive); man makes out of his free will, and his making has in it the elements of the gratuitous, the intransitive. Man is also a sign-making animal: the things he makes are "the signs of something other."[8] This is the distinguishing mark of humanity, Jones asserts, noting that even paleolithic man "juxtaposed marks on surfaces not with merely utile, but with significant, intent; that is to say a 're-presenting,' a 'showing again under other forms,' an 'effective recalling' of something was intended."[9]

The second line of argument is specifically Christian and serves to supplement the first, which could be called "natural."[10] Jones claims

[8]The New Orpheus, p. 29. Jones's essay was originally printed in Epoch and Artist (London, 1959).

[9]Jones, "Art and Sacrament," p. 34. Here Jones's theory closely resembles that of Susanne Langer in Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), which designates such characteristic activity as "symbolic."

[10]In the sense of natural theology.

that another word for "sign-making" is "sacramental": thus the observation that men make signs could be rephrased men make sacraments. Now for the Christian this characteristic is especially important, since Jesus himself, the perfect and representative man, was a maker of signs. The crucifixion itself involved signs: "For what was accomplished on the Tree of the Cross presupposes the sign-world and looks back to foreshadowing rites and arts of mediation and conjugation stretching back for tens of thousands of years in actual pre-history." Furthermore, on the day before he suffered, Jesus in the Upper Room "did something and said something which no matter how it is theologically interpreted and no matter what its interrelatedness to what was done on the Hill, was unmistakably and undeniably a sign-making and a rite-making and so an act of Ars; moreover an act to be, in some sense, repeated." So it was understood among his followers, among whom certain acts involving "the signs of the quasi-artifacts of bread and wine" were mandatory.[11] It is appropriate, then, to refer to Christ not only

[11]Jones, pp. 46-47, 40. The special significance of this Ars among Roman Catholics is noted, but not pressed to the point of polemic. "The exact implications touching what it is that is to be repeated have been and are debated among Christians. But according to the belief of the Catholic Church the sign-making instituted in the Upper Room is to be so closely associated with what was done on the Hill that the benefits of those doings are said to be chiefly (but far from exclusively) mediated through a continuation of that sign-making. But even if we are Christians holding an opinion at the furthest possible remove from this Catholic belief we are still committed to the notion of sign. And in any case, apart from this Christian commitment, we are committed to sign in virtue of being men" (Jones, p. 47).

as "a man along with us" but as "man-the-artist along with us," and "the Artifex, the Son."[12]

Despite the commitment of mankind to sacramentalism, Jones wonders whether modern technocratic civilization is not alienating man from his natural sacramentalism. If this is true, the dogmatic Sacramentalism of the Church will more and more become a matter of mystery and authority, or men will reject Sacramentalism as sacramentalism becomes more and more foreign to their habits of conceptualizing and living. "My own sympathies would most decidedly lean to the latter of the two alternatives," Jones concludes, "were I not persuaded that, in spite of any appearances, man remains, by definition, man-the-artist. But that conviction will furnish no lorica or padding against the dilemmas and quandaries."[13]

No critic outside the Roman Communion, so far as I know, has attempted theoretically to join sacrament and art as have Ross and Jones, though Anglican critics, like their Roman brethren, have been conscious of the relationship in practical criticism. Martin Jarrett-Kerr, in Studies in Literature and Belief,[14] lauds Dostoyevsky for his "sacramental" view of nature.[15] Nathan A. Scott, Jr., in discussing the

[12]Jones, pp. 46, 45.

[13]Jones, p. 57.

[14]London, 1954.

[15]Cf. Ross's view of Dostoyevsky above. It is also interesting that William Lynch illustrates the immersion of the Christian imagination in the "definite" from the same author (Christ and Apollo, pp. 18-27).

modern Italian writer Ignazio Silone, speaks of his "essentially liturgical conception of the problem of society." Those characters, he writes, "who devote themselves to [the] work of redemption, that was initiated by Christ, are in truth extensions of His Presence: in their action is contained a sacramental quality which we must apprehend and lay hold of, if we are to be saved from the wreckage and disorder of contemporary history."[16] And Paul Elman also draws on sacramentalism when he states that "the possibility of being true to life implies more than a faithfulness to accidental qualities, and involves a recognition of sources and destiny without which the factual world remains absurd. The Church has enshrined the necessity of concretion in its sacramental theology, recognizing for example in its eucharistic doctrine the banality of bread and wine transfigured by its explicit relation to the Ground of Being."[17] The sacramental orientation of the criticism of these men stems, no doubt, from the sacramental orientation of Anglican theology. The view of the Eucharist as an extension of the Incarnation is a strongly Anglican emphasis.[18]

But Nicolas Berdyaev, in Dostoyevsky, trans. Donald Atwater (New York, 1934), illustrates his very different theory of creative transcendence.

[16]Rehearsals of Discomposure: Alienation and Reconciliation in Modern Literature (New York, 1952), p. 98.

[17]"Twice-Blessed Enamel Flowers: Reality in Contemporary Fiction," p. 100.

[18]See "The Incarnation Extended" The Incarnation: Trends in Modern Anglican Thought, Lewis B. Smedes (Kampen, Holland, 1953).

But almost as if to support Malcolm Ross's charge that Protestantism is non-sacramental, Protestant critics have attempted, to my knowledge, no theory of art or literature as sacramental. There are, however, some interesting remarks by the British non-conformist P. T. Forsyth in his book Christ on Parnassus: Lectures on Art, Ethic, and Theology. Instead of applying theological concepts to art, he applies the principles of Hegel's Aesthetik to religion. In this Forsyth is a man of the nineteenth century, looking back to the days of German idealism in which attempts were made to reconcile all the disparities of life in grand systems of philosophy. To Hegel Christianity is a synthesis of Greek naturalism and the Hebrew sense of God as transcendence: "The ancient Greek transfused Nature with thought and imagination, lingered upon it, and discovered in it a fine significance and a subtle law," writes Forsyth. "The Jew made it but a stepping-stone to heaven, a mere pendant of God. To the Greek the world was his familiar home, to the Jew only his inn. Now, if we could join these conceptions," he reflects, "should we not have the Christian mind? If we marry penetrative Greek imagination to masterful Jewish spirituality, have we not that spiritual imagination which is the artistic feature of Christendom?"[19]

Also suggestive of the Hegelian attempt at synthesis are Forsyth's brief comments about the sacramentalism of art:

[19]London, 1912, p. 84.

> All art is sacramental in its nature . . . . The artist has a certain vision, which he embodies in a certain material form, with the object of conveying to poor me the same vision or the same mood. The outward is used by his inward to rouse a like inwardness in me. But his sacramental use of the outward is more than memorial, more than symbolic. He incarnates his vision, he does not merely suggest it. There is a certain transubstantiation. He does not simply associate his feeling with the material, nor symbolize it, but he embodies his feeling in the material. His material assumes a form prescribed, nay, compelled, by the nature of his idea. In Art the work clothes the idea like a skin it produces, and not like a garment it throws on. Hence, in Art also (as in the central rite of the great aesthetic Church of Rome), the sacramental element acquires a permanent and eternal value for itself . . . . [T]he material is there, not for the satisfaction of sense, however refined, nor for the rousing of memory, but to bring about some communion of spirit between me on the one hand and the artist's interpretative genius on the other--nay, rather, with the world, the idea, or message with which he is charged.[20]

Symbol and Myth

Both Malcolm Ross and David Jones, in discussing the implications of sacramentalism for the Christian view of art, are alarmed at the tendency toward scientism and positivism which has profoundly affected the way in which language is seen to operate. It is a commonplace, in fact, for commentators to observe that for the past three hundred years the range of what is regarded as meaningful discourse has been more and more delimited until uses of language which are not empirically verifiable--and this includes poetic and religious utterances--are

[20]Forsyth, pp. 257-258.

viewed as meaningless. What Ross and Jones maintain, each in his own way, is that other levels--the symbolical and theological, for instance--are also in some sense "meaningful" and should not be ruled *a priori* out of bounds. Other Christian Critics, too, are concerned with validating the symbolical and mythical levels of language.[21] Citing Thomas Sprat's *History of the Royal Society* as a *locus classicus* for early positivism, John McGill Krumm notices that there have been in recent years efforts to widen the scope of legitimate "meaning," and connects these efforts with biblical sacramentalism: "The seventeenth-century assumption that all really important things can be discovered and known without recourse to what we should now call--without any derogatory implication--mythological truth is an assumption that would be widely challenged today by Christian theologians; also by poets, novelists, and dramatists; and by an influential school of modern philosophy which acknowledges the penetrating and illuminating power of symbols. The Biblical understanding of nature as sacramental in principle opens

[21]For a discussion which stresses religious and literary theories of symbolism see Donald Scott Heines, "Problems of Literary Criticism and Theological Perspectives" (unpublished dissertation, Columbia University, 1964). Heines deals with figures who appear in this study, but he also treats several whom I do not discuss in detail: Martin Buber, Philip Wheelwright, Erich Auerbach, and W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. Heines's dissertation, however, is much more limited in scope than this one; it makes little attempt to "place" theological criticism in a context of literary criticism and theology, and it focuses on less than a dozen "major" critics.

up a whole new dimension in nature which is never taken into account in scientific analysis and description."[22] Evidently, as Krumm intimates by speaking both of "mythological truth" and "the penetrating and illuminating power of symbols," the fate of symbol and myth are inextricably linked. Both are "sacramental," in David Jones's sense of the word; both "recollect" and "re-present" something other than themselves.

That myth or symbol is basic to the structure of literary art is the point made by Roy M. Battenhouse. Poetry is not to be judged as metaphysics or religion, Battenhouse asserts at the outset; the poet is a craftsman and is to be evaluated in terms of his skill as a maker with words. Nonetheless, a work of art "implies an order of metaphysical or religious valuation. The finished poem has an organization of symbol and a structure of myth which no merely esthetic reasons can account for." In an age when there are no commonly accepted interpretations of life, the search for mythic ordering of experience has become an acute problem for the artist, for "each realizes that unless some key to order is adopted and some scheme of myth embraced, no significant patterns can be discerned in experience and no symbol will have other than purely imagist value." Thus we see that the necessity for myth is not secondary or merely the desire for verbal ornamentation, but the need of the poet "for a key by which to unlock insight, a stand from which to view experience, a selected and given story by which to

[22]"Theology and Literature: The Terms of the Dialogue on the Modern Scene," The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature, p. 24.

approach human events with a view to reading their story. Myths serve the artist as first principles by which both to explore and to explain." But how is Christianity relevant here? It can, according to Battenhouse, furnish the poet "a completely adequate world of myth within which all things can be assigned their peculiar place in the total realm of experience and accorded their proportionate and proper value."[23]

Nathan A. Scott, Jr. in an essay on "Religious Symbolism in Contemporary Literature," uses an equally broad definition, speaking of the "radical technique of the imagination, whereby the poetic mind gives consent to a ruling myth that introduces order and coherence into the whole of that experience from which particular symbols spring and from which, in fact, they take their meaning." But whereas Battenhouse was interested in the relevance of Christianity to the poet, Scott's approach to literature is from the standpoint of the critic. Here, as we have seen him do before, he introduces theological concepts from Paul Tillich, asserting that "in turning to the writers of today who are presenting the most important testimony about the human condition, we may then regard the significant patterns of symbolism implicit in their work as religious in whatever degree to which they suggest the ultimate concerns of contemporary man." He then proceeds to pick out four mythic configurations which he sees to be important in modern literature: the myth of the Isolato (the term is from Moby Dick), the

[23]Battenhouse, "The Relation of Theology to Literary Criticism," pp. 16-17, 20.

myth of Hell, the myth of Voyage, and the myth of Sanctity--and then he illustrates the four myths from various nineteenth-and twentieth-century writers such as Melville, Conrad, Joyce, Graham Greene, and Eliot.[24]

Another perspective on symbolism is offered by H. D. Lewis in his Morals and Revelation. He is addressing himself to the problem of how we know God, for which he thinks neither rationalism nor mysticism, the traditional explanations, to be adequate: rationalism leads only

[24]Religious Symbolism, ed. F. Ernest Johnson (New York, 1955), pp. 159-184. Since Scott introduces the theology of Tillich into a discussion of symbol and myth in literature, it is perhaps appropriate at this point to mention Tillich's views on these subjects. One of the characteristics of symbol to Tillich is its "power of opening up dimensions of reality." The difference between artistic symbols and religious symbols is that the former "open up the human spirit for the dimension of aesthetic experience and they open up reality to the dimension of its intrinsic meaning," whereas the latter "mediate ultimate reality through things, persons, events which because of their mediating functions receive the quality of 'holy'" ("The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols," Religious Experience and Truth, ed. Sidney Hook [New York, 1961], pp. 4-5). Elsewhere Tillich writes that the work of art as a figurative thing "does not point beyond itself to a reality of a different order." It rather "expresses wholly intrinsically the reality it aims to express." Thus art is to be distinguished from myth, which is "an objectification of the transcendent through the medium of intuitions and conceptions of reality." When art tries to express transcendent reality (as, for instance, in symbolic art) it sacrifices its purely artistic character and takes on symbolic and mythic character ("The Religious Symbol," Hook, pp. 312-313). Here Tillich would seem to be with the New Critics, who insist that a work of art not be dissolved into something else but be looked at as a self-contained whole. However, we have seen Tillich introduce the religious dimension of "depth" in his theology of culture and in his discussion of artistic styles (see above, Chapters One and Two).

to formal knowledge, while mysticism involves "the absurdity of claiming to see things as God sees them, to have a transcendent experience." How then can we know God without falling into anthropomorphism? "It is here," Lewis answers, "that consideration of art is important. For we have in art an awareness of reality in a form that is least reducible to the categories of our own thought, the world being thus presented in a way that has clearer traces of a sphere beyond that of finite experience itself." The artist is a seer; his function is to make people see beyond their ordinary perceptions, and he discloses new aspects of reality to which they had previously been blind. But he also encounters the incomprehensible: "the closer the artist moves to reality the more is it alarmingly aloof, and so, paradoxically but unmistakably, in art there is an unveiling which is at the same time a concealment: in the very process of clarification there is also a deepening of mystery."[25] God is also both mystery and light, and the religious experience is a non-rational experience which imparts new insights into reality along with a sense of "otherness," of the unfathomable.

Furthermore, both artistic and religious experience are symbolic and are not translatable into rational abstractions as in logic or mathematics. Rational content is important for religion only "so far as it enters, together with the evaluation of its elements, into a whole of a very different nature in which it has no isolable function.

[25]London, 1951, pp. 208-209, 212.

This does not mean that as rational truth it is negated; it can only contribute to religion because of what it is in itself, but it becomes important for religion because of something more which it renders possible. This something more is not added to, or superimposed upon, what is explicitly said. A transmutation occurs by which ideas, in a new medium and in combination with other factors, acquire a further recognisably religious import."[26] This closely parallels the situation of poetry, in which literal meaning is transmuted by the artistic medium, in combination with aesthetic factors, to acquire poetic meaning.

Finally, Lewis draws a further parallel between the "truth" of religion and the "truth" of art. Neither is true merely in the sense of abstract intellectual principles, but their truth is "given in events," in history, on the level of "arresting fact," of concrete particularity and experience. Thus both art and religion are symbolic of the "wholly other" in the sense that both have to "mediate for us a reality not ourselves, avoiding the romanticism that confuses us with exudations of ourselves and the obscurantism in which the self is lost . . . . We must turn our minds out into the world, break out of the routine of our own orbit to voyage among things, we must touch and see; as the scriptures teach, we have to lose our own lives and then we may find that we have saved them."[27]

[26]H. D. Lewis, Morals and Revelation, pp. 215-216.

[27]H. D. Lewis, p. 255.

A similar argument is advanced by Ray Brett in "The Function of Literary Imagery in Christian Understanding." He notes that modern criticism holds that ambiguity, depth, and complexity are poetic virtues. Any translation of the poem into abstract terms is inadequate, for it does violence to the rich particularity of image and symbol in which poetic meaning is embodied. It is likewise futile to attempt to translate the Christian faith into a series of logical propositions, for the Holy Spirit works in terms of specific historical events; and the "meaning" of these events is more than any abstracted interpretation of them. This is notably true with the Scriptures themselves; as Brett remarks, "It is clear, as I see it, from modern New Testament criticism, that the Gospel story is not simply a naive chronicling of historical events, but a theological interpretation of these events." This is as true for the Epistles as for the Gospels: they are literary works, expressed in symbols and imagery whose patterns must be explored and explicated by the methods of literary criticism.[28]

The modern New Testament criticism to which Brett evidently refers has come to be known as "the theology of images," and is a movement, primarily among British Anglo-Catholic scholars, to apply what appear to be the techniques of the New Criticism to the Bible, and to undergird the practical criticism with theoretical statements about the significance of image and symbol for the Christian revelation. Since

[28]Christian Scholar, XXXVI (June 1953), 96.

this strategy, moving from literary criticism to theology, is precisely the opposite of the strategy of the "Christian Criticism" which is the major subject of this essay, i.e. to move from theology to literature, I shall mention only one example of "the theology of images." Austin Farrer's The Glass of Vision[29] is an enquiry into "the form of divine truth in the human mind." His thesis about the nature of revelation is similar to Brett's: both poetic truth and revealed truth are imagistic; the difference is that the poet's images reveal an impression of human life, while the "great images and archetypes" of the biblical writers (e.g., the kingship, judgeship, and fatherhood of God, and the sonship and saviorhood of Christ, which are iterative throughout the Scriptures) provide the substance of our understanding of the divine, beyond which we cannot see. Subordinate to the "great" images are image patterns characteristic of particular writers and even specific books and passages. For instance, on the basis of image parallels between the section in St. Mark's Gospel describing the final treatment of Jesus' living body by his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemani, and the section describing the body of Jesus in the hands of the disciples after his death (as well as parallel echoes of Old Testament stories), Farrer establishes a "poetic" case for the ending of the Gospel at 16:8 rather

[29](Westminster, 1948). For other examples of the theology of images see Farrer's A Rebirth of Images (Westminster, 1949), as well as Eric Mascall's Words and Images (London, 1957) and Theology and Images (London, 1963).

than 16:20.[30]

The preoccupation of critics with myth and symbol has come under sharp attack from those who doubt its validity for the Christian. The first and major objection comes from those who hold that the Christian faith is essentially historical, whereas the kind of meaning that image and symbol involve is ahistorical; furthermore, there exists the danger of dehistoricizing Christianity and reducing it to mere symbolic and mythic status.[31] Specifically dealing with Farrer, Ronald W. Hepburn sees that the disregarding of the problem of historical reliability is dangerous. It is true, as Farrer claims, that the images are "untranslatable," but it is also true that they "point beyond themselves into history." If we limit ourselves only to an analysis of the images we learn nothing, however, about their historicity, whether they have to do with "a particular historical figure or event." Then he spells out two problems for the image critic:

> The first is the problem of presenting to the twentieth century reader the meaning of biblical concepts; to recreate for him their complex liaisons throughout the enormous corpus of Canonical and sometimes also non-Canonical literature. This task is very close to

[30]See the Appendix to this chapter.

[31]See, for instance, Martin Jarrett-Kerr's questioning of the Jungian approach of Maud Bodkin. He sees two problems with it: (1) the racial unconscious is highly indiscriminate. (2) It is doubtful whether universal archetypes can reestablish the possibility of affirmation of images, for among the experiences basic to man is "the pull and interplay between fact and fiction, which evaporates if it is itself treated as fiction" (Studies in Literature and Belief, p. 176).

> that of a literary critic like Caroline Spurgeon in her work on Shakespeare's imagery--providing the reader with the full weight of meaning the author put into his writing. Here the biblical theologian has been markedly successful. The second problem is not of meaning but of reference: do these images apply to the world as it is fact? Here his voice is much less authoritative, his study is no longer autonomous. Indeed, some of his brightest successes in the first task seem to thwart the successful advancement of the second--as when historically vital sources display patterns "too good to be true." Or if he sees no threat here, he must at least back up in a detailed (non-typological) way his continued trust that his symbols rest on a firm historical substratum.[32]

The second major class of objections is philosophical; criticism has come from both the existentialist camp and from the linguistic analysts. One of the most influential and controversial schools of biblical theology in the twentieth century is that dominated by the Marburg New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann. It is his contention that the world-view of the New Testament is mythological in that it seeks to present the other-worldly and divine as appearing and acting on the worldly and human level. But such pre-scientific discourse is no longer viable for modern man.[33] What then? Is the Bible to be

[32]"Poetry and Religious Belief," Metaphysical Beliefs, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre (London, 1957), pp. 98, 102-103.

[33]Bultmann's use of myth is that of the "History of Religions" school ("New Testament and Mythology," Kerygma and Myth, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch and trans. Reginald F. Fuller, rev. ed., [New York, 1961], p. 10, n. 2), and he does not seem to see that artistic language also involves "myth" and is thus unacceptable to modern "scientific" man. In Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York, 1958) he writes: "The nature of man is to be seen in modern literature, as, for instance, in the novels

thrown into the ash-heap of primitive superstition? No. Concealed in the myth is the kerygma, the divine word or proclamation addressed to man which must be "demythologized" to be relevant today. At this point Bultmann brings in the existential philosophy of Martin Heidegger: the New Testament is to be remythologized or restated as presenting the choice between unauthentic and authentic existence, as offering freedom from anxiety and pride and a "new life" in faith and love and obedience and openness to the future.[34]

Bultmann's proposals have been attacked repeatedly and on many grounds, but perhaps most pertinent for our purposes is the criticism of Roland M. Frye and Amos N. Wilder. Frye compares Bultmann to the biblicist Fundamentalists who also deny the validity of the dramatic and symbolic in the Scriptures. But whereas Bultmann would reduce

---

of Thomas Mann, Ernst Jünger, Thornton Wilder, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Graham Greene and Albert Camus, or in the plays of Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Anouilh, Jean Giraudoux, etc. Or let us think simply of the newspapers. Have you read anywhere in them that political or social or economic events are performed by supernatural powers such as God, angels or demons? Such events are always ascribed to natural powers, or to good or bad will on the part of men, or to human wisdom or stupidity" (p. 37). But is the mythic as absent from twentieth-century literature as Bultmann contends? Thomas L. Hanna, in an essay entitled "A Question: What Does One Mean by 'Religious Literature'?" Mansions of the Spirit, ed. George A. Panichas (New York, 1967) sets up a very restricted definition of it: a work of art is religious "when and if it exhibits the visible or invisible presence or potency of the divine." But even within his definition he mentions Graham Greene and T. S. Eliot as authors who present the divine as one of the dramatis personae: "God or gods appear visually, auditorily, tactilely, or as hidden but logically certain manipulators of scenery and events--this is an ancient and continuing tradition in literature, and such literature, internally considered, is religious. Here, then, we have a clear and indisputable hold on an internal, belles-lettres conception of religious literature, and we can point to epics, tales, narrative poems, ballads, short stories, dramas, and novels which fully bear us out" (pp. 80-81).

[34]Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," pp. 17-44.

symbol and myth to existentialist abstractions, the Fundamentalists insist on a literal interpretation of the Bible stricter than that believed in by such Renaissance Christians as Boccaccio and Sidney and Milton. Even the Protestant Reformer John Calvin taught that the truth of God was "accommodated" to finite and sometimes unscientific, unhistorical human conceptions.[35] Wilder opposes Bultmann on the basis of modern literary criticism, which has reminded us, he argues, that it is dangerous to attempt to reduce mytho-poetic statement to abstract paraphrase. Such abstractions constitute a denigration of myth that is unwarranted, for:

> mythological statement represents knowledge of a kind. It has a cognitive aspect. It represents not merely an emotional reaction to reality but a judgment about reality, an account of reality, and an account based upon this kind of concrete and subtle experience. Of course, there are differences in the degree of truth of such accounts. But the pictorial affirmations are to be taken seriously in their particularity. The corollaries for us of this view of symbolic statement are that we shall expect to find wisdom in NT [sic] myth, but not a wisdom that can be identified with some prose statement or some theological formula. The images or the fable must be assigned their rights in terms of all their connotations.[36]

Wilder is able to make this criticism because of his own high view of mytho-poetic language; elsewhere he writes:

> In the last analysis religious expression and poetry have it in common that they testify to reality, and by symbolic means. The final difference must be in what they report or reveal. Evidently it is here

[35] Perspective on Man, pp. 33-41.

[36] "Scholars, Theologians, and Ancient Rhetoric," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXV (1956), 10-11.

> that we would find the peculiar existential concern of religious discourse. Revelation represents the initial moment or arche from which also the arts spring. But it would be mistaken to deny existential seriousness to poetry or art. It is true that poetry, in the innumerable forms and genres that it takes on in various cultures, has many roles that are largely unrelated to the religious life. We must also recognize, as the Thomist would put it, that the artist gives himself to the work in view where the believer presses on to communion with God. But such distinctions should not lead us to a denial of that initial "epiphany" or world-making moment which lies behind all significant poetry, particularly today when religious forms have lost much of their relevance for man's perennial need.[37]

There is also a growing group of theologians influenced by the positivist-oriented linguistic analysis school; their attitude toward the meaning of biblical and religious language is largely negative. They will not go so far as did the early A. J. Ayer to deny all meaning to such discourse, but in seeking to assert some kind of meaning for it they severely restrict its validity--for instance, Paul Van Buren in The Secular Meaning of the Gospel[38] reduces the status of religious statement to an expression of one's private "blik," one's emotional attitude towards life which is neither objectively verifiable nor subject to intellectual analysis.

These theologians stress radical immanence; any belief in "spirit" or "the transcendent," no matter how disguised in sophisticated

[37]"Poetry and Religion," Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, pp. 113-114.

[38]New York, 1963.

metaphysics, is a vestigial holdover from Platonic dualism and is no longer credible. Since the etymology of the word symbol (from Greek symballein: to throw together) suggests an attempt to link two levels of reality, the possibility of symbolic meaning is probably precluded as well.

If some theologians wish to collapse the transcendent into the immanent, at least one twentieth-century writer, Nicolas Berdyaev, believes that the immanent-transcendent dualism which gives rise to symbolism will ultimately give way to the transcendent. It is true that all order, all meaning in the natural world is symbolic of the other, the spiritual world. The alternatives to admitting this are to retire either into absolute psychologistic subjectivism (as Kant did) or into naturalistic positivism, thus becoming enslaved to this world. For "the symbolic conception of the world is the only profound one and it alone manifests and makes clear the deep mysteries of being. The whole of our natural life here below is devoid of meaning save when there lies upon it a symbolic sanctity . . . ." By symbolic sanctity Berdyaev means that in this world are perceived signs of another world which is infinite and mysterious and spiritual. But he does not halt at a flesh-spirit dualism, the two levels connected only by symbol. In the Incarnation the Christian sees the entering of the infinite into the finite, the penetration of flesh by spirit; therefore Berdyaev rejoices: "All flesh is a symbol of the spirit, the reflection, the image, and the sign of another far off, yet much more profound,

reality. All that we call created nature is by no means a reality in itself, rather it is a symbolic reality and a reflection of the light which belongs to the spiritual world." The coming of Christ into the world, in fact, proclaims the victory of spirit over flesh: "The obstinacy of the flesh is only the symbol of a fall in the spiritual world. But the illumination of the flesh manifested by the earthly life of the Son of God is the indication of a fresh uprising in the spiritual world."[39]

Art, too, looks to the ascendancy of spirit over flesh. The tragedy of art, he writes in The Meaning of the Creative Act, is that artistic creativity aims "to create another type of being, another kind of life, to break out through 'this world' to another world, out of the chaotic, heavy and deformed world into the free and beautiful cosmos." But there is always a gap between aim and realization, for what happens is merely that artistic-cultural objects are created: "Creativeness goes out not into another world, but into the culture of this world." It succeeds in creating only symbols, shadows of the ideal world of true being. Now classical art is satisfied with "culture": it is immanent, at home in this world. Christian-romantic art, in contrast, is not satisfied with formal perfection in this world: "In Christian art there is always a transcendental intention towards another world, towards an upsurge beyond the limits of the

[39]Freedom and the Spirit, trans. Oliver F. Clarke (New York, 1935), pp. 54, 61.

immanent world; there is romantic longing. A romantic incompleteness and imperfection of form characterize Christian art." But we are now at a critical transitional stage in history: both this-worldly art (whether it be called classicism or display the slavish subjection to this world of realism or naturalism) and romantic art are being surpassed by a "new symbolism" which is no longer satisfied with romantic longing: "In the new symbolism both the great creative intensity of the human spirit and the creative tragedy and illness of the spirit attain their final limits, reach the highest degree. The new man, in creative impulse, strives upward beyond the boundaries of art which have been set by this world."[40] Even this symbolism is not the final achievement, though. It in turn is making way for "theurgy," which is "art creating another world, another being, another life; creating beauty as essence, as being." What will characterize the new epoch of creativity is not the making of culture or art objects but a new working together of man with God which will be absolutely free from this world's limitations.[41]

[40]Berdyaev, The Meaning of the Creative Act, pp. 225, 228, 240. As examples of the new symbolists he lists Mallarme, Maeterlinck, Ibsen, and the Russians V. Ivanov and A. Byelii. In his distinction between classic and Christian art Berdyaev is possibly influenced by German romantic criticism: Wellek quotes August Wilhelm Schlegel as making a very similar distinction between Greek and "Romantic" poetry (A History of Modern Criticism, II [New Haven, 1955], 59).

[41]Berdyaev, Creative Act, pp. 247-248.

Appendix

Austin Farrer works from the premise that there is no way actually to reconstruct the actualities of the Gospel's composition--we cannot, for example, know whether St. Mark was stopped by the Roman authorities after writing 16:8; or whether he indeed wrote more, that was lost. The argument rests, then, on poetical probability: does the ending at 16:8 coincide with the patterns of images and themes that we find in the rest of the Gospel? It will not do, Farrer argues, to dismiss St. Mark's style as poor, unliterary Greek, for he builds up, unconsciously and artlessly, perhaps, "strong poetic expectations."[42]

The task, therefore, is to prove that the conclusion at 16:8 has "poetical" as well as historical inevitability (most scholars hold that 16:9 ff. were added later to round out the story and to parallel the endings of the other Gospels). First, there is the matter of theme. The ending, as Farrer sees it, says that "the act of God always overthrows human expectation: the Cross defeats our hope: the Resurrection terrifies our despair." This fits the larger theme of St. Mark's passion narrative, which is that "no man knows what to do with the divine when it falls into his hands." As evidence of this theme Farrer cites the following from the narrative:

> A woman tries to anoint the Lord for glory, only to learn that she has fore-anointed him for burial. The apostles attempt heroics in defence of Christ, but

[42]Farrer, The Glass of Vision, p. 138.

> when it comes to it they forsake him and flee, that he may remain and die for them. The priests condemn him to preserve their priesthood, but in condemning him they tear up their priesthood and overthrow their temple. Pilate crucifies him, falsely accused of claiming the earthly shadow of an eternal kingdom which is actually his. The Arimathaean carefully buries him whom no sepulchre can hold, and the women, not understanding why his fore-anointing for burial with that festal nard had been providential, bring funeral myrrh to embalm the already risen God. The mere rustling of the hem of his risen glory, the voice of the boy in the white robe, turns them to headlong flight: "and they said not a word to anyone, for they were afraid".[43]

The second pattern which Farrer examines is the phrase rhythm. Rhythmic repetition is so obvious in this Gospel that some critics see nothing in it but "a string of spoken anecdotes, one reflecting the pattern of another with childish iteration." But Farrer sees the subtle echoes between paragraphs as a poetic merit, not merely indicating subliterary naïveté. In the case of the ending, the description of "the body of Jesus in the hands of his disciples after his death," there are close parallels to the passage describing "the last experiences of Jesus in the body at the hands of his disciples." A synopsis of the two sections will support the parallels; in the first: "When Jesus was at supper, a woman brought a jar of nard and anointed him: a good work, he said, for they would not have him always--she had fore-anointed his body for burial. Presently Jesus is seen at supper again: he gives his disciples his sacramental body, and says to them: after I am risen again I will go before you into Galilee. In the garden he admonishes them--especially three of them--to watch, but they

[43]Farrer, pp. 139-140.

are taken unprepared by the catastrophe: all forsake him and flee, among them a youth in a linen cloth, who left it in his pursuer's hands to make good his escape." In the second, "Joseph obtains the body of Jesus from Pilate, and buries it, wrapping it in a linen cloth: three women bring perfumes to embalm it. Entering, they see a youth in a white stole. He bids them tell the disciples that Jesus goes before them into Galilee, as he had said to them (at the Supper). The women flee, saying nothing to anyone."[44]

Then Farrer lists the common features of the two sections:

> A woman in the one case, women in the other, come to perfume the body of Jesus: Jesus himself says that the first perfuming is what the second was intended to have been, a funeral anointing. In the first section Jesus prophesies that he will precede his disciples into Galilee: in the second the prophecy is explicitly recalled. In the first Jesus gives his disciples his sacramental body, which it really concerns them to have: in the second, disciples obtain and vainly wall up his physical body, which they are unable to keep. In both a symbolical part is played by a linen cloth--the youth in the garden is stripped of one, the sacred body is wrapped in one. The word "linen cloth" is rare--St. Mark does not use it elsewhere. In both "a lad" (again the word is confined to this pair of texts) "clad in" some named garment plays a prominent part. In both a sudden catastrophe falls on disciples--the women at the sepulchre, the three special watchers in Gethsemane with their companions: and in both they react in the same way--by flight.[45]

Further, Farrer expands on the parallels between the two lads "clad in": the first, showing the lack of preparation of the disciples for

[44]Farrer, p. 140.

[45]Farrer, pp. 139-141.

Christ's arrest, looks forward to the second, who shows the lack of preparation for his resurrection. The silence at 16:8 in the face of the resurrection, the greatest miracle of all, echoes the silence Jesus enjoined on the disciples after many of the miracles during his lifetime; and whereas the earlier injunctions were often followed, perversely, by loud proclamations of Jesus' power, here the disciples, again illustrating human perversity, are too fearful to proclaim the good tidings of the resurrection. The clothing motif in both passages is also significant, as we have seen suggested. Clothing is a sign in the New Testament of preparedness: fleeing naked shows unpreparedness. Ironically, the "preparedness" of Jesus for burial in grave-clothes illustrates the inadequacy of human understanding of the resurrection, for Jesus will slough off an earthly garment in favor of a heavenly one. Clothing associated specifically with Joseph of Arimathea, who provided for Jesus' burial, recalls the Joseph in the Old Testament. As Joseph the Arimathean begged Pilate for the body of Jesus, Joseph the patriarch begged Pharoah for permission to bury Israel, which also cost him a hard journey. The story of the young Joseph's "burial" in the pit and his re-appearance to his brothers as if recalled from the dead parallels the burial and resurrection of Christ: and in both cases they who confronted the man thought dead were confounded and unable to speak.

These parallels and rhythms are not, of course, necessary for our salvation, Farrer points out. Nor are they the only sort of evidence the biblical scholar will want to pursue. But they do suggest that the bible is to be read as an interwoven tapestry of themes and images.[46]

[46]This critical method is applied by Farrer on a larger scale in A Study in St. Mark (New York, 1952) and St. Matthew and St. Mark (Westminster, 1954).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TRAGIC AND THE COMIC

The Tragic

Since drama, historically, is of all the art forms the most closely related to the original art form, the holy dance,[1] it is not surprising that the dramatic forms, and the tragic and comic attitudes associated with them, have been highly significant to Christian Critics. Most scholars agree that during the two great periods of drama, in ancient Greece and in Renaissance Europe, what we have is the increasing artistic independence of drama from the sacer ludus, the holy play which was originally liturgical in nature.[2] But if Greek drama always remained religious (if not directly liturgical),[3]

[1]This is the thesis of Gerardus van der Leeuw in Sacred and Profane Beauty.

[2]The Latin term is coined by van der Leeuw on p. 80.

[3]I am not concerning myself with the theological orthodoxy of Greek drama--it is quite possible, for example, that the view of life in Euripides' plays is quite heretical--but the plays were always identified with a religious festival.

drama in Europe and the English speaking countries has, over the past six hundred years, been removed from promixity to the altar and has been thoroughly secularized.[4] There even grew up in the Church hostility to the stage, a hostility which expressed itself, for instance, in the automatic excommunication of all actors from the Roman Catholic Church, the closing of the London theatres by the Puritans in the seventeenth century, and the shunning of the theatre by many conservative Christians to this day.

This historic antipathy is still felt among Christian Critics. Indeed, one Roman Catholic critic goes so far as to say, for reasons I shall explore presently, that there is "a necessary and essential incompatibility between drama and religion, a mutual exclusion of each by the other, which is grounded in their respective natures."[5] Most Christian Critics, though, avoid such sweeping generalizations and direct their comments specifically to the relationship between Christianity and the traditional modes of tragedy and comedy. Much of this commentary, it must be admitted, is predominantly theoretical,

[4]I do not forget the fact that there was a revival of "religious" drama in England in the 1930's which gave rise to the plays of T. S. Eliot, Charles Williams, Dorothy Sayers, and others. Some of these plays, however, were directly influenced by the medieval mystery and morality plays; others, like Eliot's later plays such as The Family Reunion, were attempts to come to grips with forms not so closely identified with religion historically. But the feeling that one must write a "Christian" play in a "secular" idiom supports the generalization that drama has been secularized.

[5]E. I. Watkin, Poets and Mystics (London, 1953), p. 41.

so that whatever contributions it makes to critical understanding are on the speculative level: only occasionally does one of these critics indulge in detailed analysis of a particular work of tragic or comic art, but when this is done both the work of art and the theological-critical position of the critic are illumined. Often the theorist will focus on the similarity or dissimilarity between the tragic or comic mythos or plot and the Christian mythos or story (usually patterned on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ). Or he may compare the Christian view of man with the nature of the tragic or comic protagonist.

The problem of tragedy has attracted the most critical attention. Ironically, it seems that the first major critic who proclaimed that religion and tragedy were at odds, I. A. Richards, was not himself a religionist but was concerned with protecting what he felt to be an anti-religious experience from the erosion of religion. To obtain the tragic experience, the psychological balance which derives from the catharsis of pity and terror, Richards writes,

> the mind does not shy away from anything, it does not protect itself with any illusion, it stands uncomforted, unintimidated, alone and self-reliant. The test of its success is whether it can face what is before it and respond to it without any of the innumerable subterfuges by which it ordinarily dodges the full development of experience . . . . The joy which is so strangely the heart of the experience is not an indication that "all's right with the world" or that "somewhere, somehow, there is Justice"; it is an indication that all is right here and now in the nervous system.

Evidently what a Christian would call hope is one of the subterfuges,

for he continues: "Tragedy is only possible to a mind which is for the moment agnostic or Manichean. The least touch of any theology which has a compensating Heaven to offer the tragic hero is fatal."[6]

From a historical and philosophical perspective rather than a psychological one, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers concludes much the same thing. The tragic sense, according to Jaspers, dissolves the rationalizations of philosophy and the assurances of religion. No version of the accepted myths can remain stable for the tragedian, and each playwright revises them in his "passionate struggle for truth." This struggle means that tragedy will ask ultimate questions, in visual and dramatic ways: "Why are things the way they are? What is man? What leads him on? What is guilt? What is fate? What are the ordinations valid among men, and where do they come from? What are the gods?"[7]

Nonetheless these questions later become rationalized into philosophy, and instead of passionate questions there are constructed systems of thought which purport to establish universal harmony: the result is that the tragic man is "liberated" into apathy. The other "liberation" from tragedy is provided by revealed religion's offer of salvation. The discrepancies of life which are felt by tragedy are explained by Judaism and Christianity as the result of original sin, which enmeshes

[6]Principles of Literary Criticism (New York, 1925), p. 246.

[7]Tragedy Is Not Enough, trans. H. A. T. Reiche et al. (London, 1953), p. 35.

every man in guilt. But Christ is presented to the Christian as the redeemer who by choice identifies himself with sin and guilt to deliver man from them: "This is tragedy no longer. The darkness of terror is pierced by the radiance of blessedness and grace. Seen from this point of view, Christian salvation opposes tragic knowledge. The chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without chance of escape. Therefore no genuinely Christian tragedy can exist. For in Christian plays, the mystery of redemption is the basis and framework of the plot, and the tension of tragic knowledge has been released from the outset with the experience of man's perfection and salvation through grace."[8]

Richard Sewall, who also emphasizes that tragedy deals with human questioning in the face of an inexplicable universe, agrees essentially with Jaspers but does allow that Christianity brought with it a new self-consciousness. Neither the Greeks nor the Old Testament (even Job) was greatly concerned with the examination of the soul, the inner life. The Christian, however, examined the soul and found therein utter guilt and condemnation which far surpassed the self-reproach of an Oedipus, who remained proud even in his downfall. And the Christian man, sinful though he was, now was faced with the agonizing dilemma of choosing blessedness or damnation. The new sensitivity which was his as a result of self-examination was not cancelled out even when he believed

[8]Jaspers, pp. 38-39.

in the salvation that was divinely proffered, for he had continually to examine his soul to ascertain whether indeed it remained in a state of grace. Therefore the terrifying possibilities of heaven and hell, of hope and despair, became a permanent part of Western man's experience.

Now it is true that the Mass took the place, during the Middle Ages, that the theatre doubtless had for the faithful at the ancient Dionysian festivals; it, like the ancient tragedies, portrayed suffering and sacrifice, and even provided a kind of cathartic effect. But there grew up in the late Middle Ages a new interest in evil, death, and damnation which began to cancel out the assurances of the Church and paved the way for the burst of tragedy in the sixteenth century which reflected the "inwardness" of Christian piety but directed it towards an expression of insecurity and despair.[9] This is as much as one can concede to Christianity, I suspect, if one views tragedy as essentially nihilistic. But this sort of position with regard to tragedy reveals as much about the anti-religious bias of the theorists who hold it as it does about the nature of tragedy itself--yet one is to presume that they are looking at tragedy "objectively."

Most of the critics, however, who hold that tragedy and Christianity are incompatible are concerned not to preserve a notion of tragedy but to preserve Christianity--for they, like the critics just discussed, believe that the two are irreconcilable. An early statement

[9]The Vision of Tragedy (New Haven, 1959), pp. 51-55.

of this kind, one which has influenced subsequent criticism, is that of the Neo-Orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. In contrasting tragedy and Christianity he first sets up a definition of "true tragedy," which he distinguishes from most so-called tragedy which is merely pitiful and pathetic. The novels of Hardy, for instance, are full of creatures who are pitiful dupes of inscrutable fate; and the plays of Ibsen have protagonists who are victims of selfish and immoral social conventions. True tragedy, in contrast, elicits reverence as well as pity, for a tragic hero defies a hostile universe in the assertion of his own soul's integrity; thus he suffers not because he is weak and pitiful but because he is strong, and he is pronounced guilty not on account of vice but on account of virtue. Furthermore, the hero inflicts suffering on himself, initiating it by a creative act against God, like Prometheus, or against the received morality, like Agamemnon or Orestes.[10]

With Christianity the situation is far different. First of all, the death which usually closes the tragic story does not close the Christian story, in which death is swallowed up in victory. The model here, of course, is Christ himself, whose crucifixion was the "resolution of tragedy. Here suffering is carried into the very life of God and

[10]The Greek tragedy is thus harking back to its Dionysian defiance of the rational, or to man's unconscious (Freudian) defiance of society (Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History [New York, 1937], p. 163).

overcome. It becomes the basis of salvation."[11] The view of guilt is also different. Along with tragedy, Christianity believes that guilt and creativity are interwoven; but whereas to the Greek tragedian creativity inevitably brings on guilt, to the Christian sin emerges not only out of creativity itself but out of human freedom, and is brought on by man's self-centeredness and egotism. Therefore the sinner, unlike the tragic hero, is not to be reverenced but only to be pitied.[12] And sin is not to be seen as an ineluctable element in the universe. Paradoxically, the proof of this is the Cross itself. The crucified victim is sinless, but this very sinlessness on the part of the "Second Adam," the new representative of all humanity, indicates the essential goodness of man. The crucifixion also reveals that God is good (in contrast to the malevolent God whom the tragic hero defies) and that he overcomes evil with goodness.

David Daiches Raphael comes at tragedy from a slightly different angle, though some of his arguments resemble those of Niebuhr. He cites two reasons why the Biblical tradition is inimical to tragedy. First, both Judaism and Christianity believe that God is just, and therefore there must be an answer to the question, why do the innocent suffer? Christianity emphasizes the ultimate moral order of the world

[11]Niebuhr, Beyond Tragedy, pp. 155-156.

[12]Thus Niebuhr feels that Greek tragedy is the purest tragedy: the Shakespearean and modern dramatic characters he mentions are only semi-tragic, for they are trapped in their tragic fate out of weakness as well as strength.

and speaks of original sin and the last judgment, whereas tragedy merely presents the struggle of man with incomprehensible evil and suffering and offers no solution to it. A second distinction between religion and tragedy is found in their respective notions of what constitutes the admirable man. In tragedy, the hero defies nature, fate, the God which opposes him, and his defiance is more sublime than the power he defies. In Christianity nature and fate are governed by a just God, and defiance against God is blasphemous: what is admirable is not the rebellious human will but humility and patience before the Almighty. Thus the Suffering Servant in Isaiah accepts suffering, and the moral order of the universe is not questioned; Job finally is submissive to God; and Milton's Samson humbly chooses death to execute God's justice on the Philistines, as does Corneille's Polyeucte. In this light it is seen that Racine's so-called "Christian tragedies" are not both Christian and tragic: his Athalie is not admirable in her defiance of God, whereas his Phedre is tragically admirable and the Jansenistic God who decrees her damnation is vindictive. Shakespeare's Lear is often called a Christian tragedy, but Cordelia's fate is, to use A. C. Bradley's term, a "waste of goodness," and Lear, rather than bearing his fate humbly, rages against the gods.[13]

[13]See the chapter "Tragedy and Religion" in Raphael's The Paradox of Tragedy (London, 1960), pp. 37-68.

The most complex argument I have encountered against the possibility of Christian tragedy is by Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier. About the only attitude tragedy and Christianity have in common, he claims, is an antipathy towards the easy sentimental optimism which held sway during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Otherwise, they are based on disparate ways of looking at the world. Tragedy relies on a "double vision" on the ultimate level: all the antinomies, opposites, and contradictions which appear in life--vitality and form, mind and matter, light and dark, etc.--are united. Hegel once wrote that "the Truth is in the whole." From this, Cherbonnier continues, one can infer that "an adequate philosophy of life must not only include everything, but must also affirm everything. It must not suppress any aspect of reality simply because some particular moral code finds it offensive or ignoble; it must not disparage any human emotion or action simply because some find it unpleasant or shocking. Conversely, it must not prefer other aspects of life simply because they are accounted 'beautiful' or 'good'. This would unduly elevate a mere part at the expense of the whole."[14] Thus the contraries of

[14]"Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy," The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. (New York, 1957), p. 26. Sylvan Barnet makes much the same point, citing A. C. Bradley as well as Hegel: "A. C. Bradley, who generally interpreted Shakespeare's tragedies without reference to Christianity, saw hints of regeneration in them and concluded, influenced probably by Hegel, that a tragedy suggests, among other ideas, that 'if we could see the whole, and the tragic facts in their true place in it, we should find them not abolished, of course, but so transmuted that they had ceased to be strictly tragic' [Shakespearean Tragedy (London, 1950), p. 324--Barnet's note]. Now, Christianity is dramatic, but it is not tragic, for . . . Christian teleology robs death of its sting" ("Some Limitations of a Christian Approach to Shakespeare," ELH, XXII [June 1955], 85).

good and evil, positive and negative, are neutral and equally valid: to choose one above the other is to be partial and partisan. Indeed, some theorists of tragedy (Cherbonnier cites Plotinus and Schelling) hold that the mere existence of discrete individuals disrupts the harmony of the universe. This, of course, leads to the denial that there really is such a thing as free will, and to the position that the tragic protagonist falls out of necessity rather than because of any punishment for good or evil (such moral discrepancies would not be compatible with universal harmony). Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Hamlet, and Romeo and Juliet are largely fatalistic in this way, though the idea of free will is also present because of the influence of the Christian heritage in Elizabethan culture. On the experiential level, however, man feels what he calls moral forces to be clashing and incompatible; and so the tragic hero finds himself choosing what he regards as one good at the expense of another good. Human freedom is thus seen as a matter of agonizing choice, and inevitably involves man in moral dilemmas and condemnation because of his partiality.

Summing up, Cherbonnier writes that the "philosophical stage setting" for tragedy includes "two shifting backdrops: the ultimate perspective of the detached observer, of the aesthete, in which all differences cancel each other out and in which no discord is possible; and the finite perspective of the man of action, in which strife and contradiction are the rule." This double perspective accounts for the hybris of the tragic hero, which can take two forms: "Either

the hero treats some segment of reality as though it were the whole (in philosophical terms, he 'absolutizes the relative'), and thus calls down upon himself the vengeance of ultimate reality; or he strives consciously to introduce absolute perfection into this merely relative world which, by definition, cannot stand perfection, and thus he inexorably exacts the death penalty." Heroes of the first type include Hamlet, who absolutizes the desire for redress of injustice; Antigone, who absolutizes family loyalty; and Lady Macbeth, who absolutizes emotional honesty. The prototype of the second sort of hero is Prometheus, who tries to introduce the arts of heaven into the imperfect world of man.[15]

This double perspective is also enjoined on the spectator of tragedy, who must hold both views in tension: "He is asked both to take seriously the hero's prowess and eventual demise, and at the same time to remain aware that all such partial, one-sided concerns are ultimately invalid." If the tension is relaxed, the tragic effect is destroyed: if the spectator focuses on the finite, he sees not tragedy but a morality play, in which goodness must be depicted as triumphant and evil punished, or he sees only "unrelieved frustration."[16] If he focuses on the ultimate, he sees not tragedy but comedy. But if he succeeds in maintaining the precarious doubleness between the

[15]Cherbonnier, pp. 30-33.

[16]Cherbonnier, p. 35.

finite and infinite, he will be rewarded with a kind of spiritual catharsis, for he will realize (from his vantage point outside the play), even as he sees the hero in his finitude devise his own doom, that "everything happens in accord with a universal law of compensation, that the hero's suffering is really only the necessary restoration of the metaphysical balance."[17]

The biblical philosophy, according to Cherbonnier, denies the double perspective integral to tragedy. There is here only one view, One perspective, because God is Creator of both heaven and earth. Therefore the Greek distinction between infinite and finite is not valid, as the infinite God himself proved by becoming finite "Flesh." Neither is it hybris to apply earthly ideas to the divine, for "the same words which apply peculiarly to human beings, as distinct from the rest of creation, are the very words which provide the clue to the nature of God: will, purpose, responsibility, intelligence, the discrimination of good and evil, forgiveness, love, even chagrin."[18] There is, it is true, a "discrepancy" between human life and the will of God; this discrepancy is not essential to the structure of being, however, but contingent on man's moral choices. These moral choices

[17]Cherbonnier, p. 37. Much of this is Hegelian, especially the observation that the tragic hero chooses between two "goods" rather than between good and evil, and the shifting of tragic reconciliation from protagonist to spectator. See W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History, p. 557.

[18]Cherbonnier, p. 41.

are not between opposites which are neutral but between good and evil, forces which will not ultimately be merged in some final metaphysical unity. Moral partisanship is thus the appropriate response rather than the cause of human downfall.

The role of the observer is also at odds with the observer of tragedy, who is above the dramatic conflict because of his "ultimate" perspective. Since there is no separable infinite perspective in the biblical view, the observer is subject to the same clashes and conflicts as the dramatic character, and must be himself an active moral participant in the drama; in this way "he becomes vulnerable to the very emotion which tragedy would purge away."[19] He is able to weep at human suffering, but is able also to feel joy and hope because the love of God has been made available on the level of experiential human reality.

Cherbonnier's argument that the tragic perspective is dissolved if the spectator takes the "ultimate" point of view seems precisely the objection of E. I. Watkin to tragedy. He charges that the observer of tragedy must accept the perception of life's conflicts and experiences which characterizes the natural or unregenerate man. But the Christian, Watkin claims, cannot be satisfied with this perception, for it is blind to what he knows to be "the real value, the value for eternity of the objects of human desire or aversion, of

[19]Cherbonnier, p. 46.

human love or human hate." For religion "lifts us to a height from which we can look down upon the conflict of these [human] values, therefore upon the tragic conflict, as a battle for shadows. The truly religious man sees the tragedies of adult humanity, as the adult sees the tragedies of the nursery." Thus, for example, Romeo's passion, Othello's jealousy, Shylock's revenge, Hedda Gabler's ambition, are not lasting. Only salvation and damnation matter, as in the case of Desdemona and Iago, respectively. The traditional account of Christ's life is the pattern for this knowledge, for it "presents an inevitable and foreknown triumph of the Divine Reality apprehended by religion over the hostile forces which sought to destroy its revelation" and is therefore not drama, for it has, finally, no dramatic conflict or tragic failure.[20] Watkin does admit that drama cannot be as easily dispensed with as his argument might imply, but he allows a very inferior place for it. Though a few have been able to write as partakers of the religious vision, they have written neither tragedy nor drama at all, but epic.[21] Most men, nonetheless, can still participate in tragedy insofar as their religious vision is inconsistent.

[20]Watkin, Poets and Mystics, pp. 43, 49. This extreme emphasis on the divine omniscience and omnipotence of Christ comes close to denying his real humanity, and is certainly at odds with the modern tendency to do full justice to his manhood: see E. J. Tinsley's comments about modern Christology, below. Watkin's attitude could be described also as a kind of "angelism," an attempt to escape the limitations of human insight.

[21]The model here, of course, is The Divine Comedy.

This inconsistency is not uncommon, because "the Divine Object of religion is so transcendent of human vision that it must be at best obscure--the apprehension of faith, not clearly seen. Its existence is known only by metaphysical insight or religious intuition."[22]

A mid-point between the positions of Watkin and Cherbonnier is taken by Laurence Michel, who differentiates between the tragic possibilities under the Old Testament dispensation and the preclusion of tragedy under the New Covenant of Christ. In the Old Testament there are present the two necessary conditions of tragedy: the inscrutability of God in the background, and in the foreground human evil. Were there not the first element, "the story would lose its power, and degenerate into a kind of ethicism." Were there not the second, "the story escapes from the human realm, and becomes an abstract intellectual speculation." Cain, Jacob, and David are examples of evildoers; there is also, on a larger scale, the unfaithfulness and rebelliousness of the Chosen People of Israel despite the claims and demands of the Mosaic Law. The Old Testament teaches us that man is free to choose evil and suffer the consequences, but if he is obedient he may speak to God and be chosen to speak for him. All this, however, involves man acting and deciding in time and in the world, individually, and therefore to the human predicament "there can be no abiding solution; and this provides room for the

[22]Watkin, p. 50.

tragic response." Man remains responding and questioning.[23] Even Job, though he finally submits, obtains no final answers.

The New Covenant is radically new, for Christ was God incarnate. In him, Michel asserts, humanity is substantially saved, and man is given the hope of an already obtained entrance into eternal joy. In addition, the sacraments--"Incarnation on a human scale"--are God coming and staying with man, uniting the spirit and the flesh, living within the souls of men. God is among us, inscrutable no longer; and there has been, once for all, a decisive solution provided for moral evil: "Sin remains, although the devastating effect of Original Sin has been removed, and each man must work out his salvation with diligence, if not in fear and trembling; but his life is no longer in the proper sense a predicament or a dilemma."[24] The conclusion is that in the New Dispensation tragedy is no longer possible, except for those who, like the Manicheans, Calvinists, and Jansenists, insist on a basically Old Testament rather than New Testament view. Thus Racine's religious tragedies grow out of his Jansenist training. Dostoyevsky's Crime and Punishment and The Brothers Karamazov show the influence of the Book of Job, which he read at the age of eight and never forgot, as well as the influence of a Russian Orthodoxy

[23]"The Possibility of a Christian Tragedy," Thought, XXXI (Autumn 1956), 414-415.

[24]Michel, p. 428.

whose Christ (reflected in the Grand Inquisitor scene) is strangely different from the Christ of the West. The American Puritan tragedians, too--Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner--and the contemporary "radical gropers," Greene, Mauriac, Bloy, and Bernanos, possess an essentially Old Testament or Manichean vision: there is the devil effecting ruin in the world, but there is no saving power, no eschatological hope in the world.

A similar distinction between the Old and New Covenants is made by J. A. Bryant, Jr.[25] Like Michel, Bryant recognizes that the full Christian story encompasses both the fall of the first Adam and the restoration of man in the Second Adam, Christ; thus it is (as Dante perceived) comic, not tragic. But is tragedy precluded? The Christian admits that the fall of Adam in Genesis is tragic, for we have the discrepancy between the undistorted image of God in man and the distortion of the image because of Adam's freely willed disobedience.[26]

[25]Hippolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays (Lexington, Ky., 1961).

[26]Roy W. Battenhouse quotes an earlier essay by Bryant in which Bryant "places" the various genres in relation to the Christian story of death in the Old Adam and new life through the New Adam; each genre partakes of one fragment of the whole (see Bryant, "Shakespeare's Allegory: The Winter's Tale," Sewanee Review, LXIII [1955], 202-222). Battenhouse takes this suggestion and theorizes that tragedy is analogous to the fall and death of the Old Adam ("Shakespearean Tragedy: A Christian Interpretation," The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, pp. 83-84). This theory parallels somewhat the theory of Michel, and differs from the theory summarized here.

Is there, however, for him a corresponding discrepancy in the Christian Dispensation? The critics who would deny the possibility of Christian tragedy would say no--but they are forgetting that, despite the fact that Christ has made it possible for man to be restored to God, it is still true that man can disobey God and "fall." Bryant points out that the fall of the Christian is, in fact, "far more tragic than Adam's, for as a result of the incarnation of God in Jesus he can see more clearly the image of the creator in his own flesh and in his own actions." Christian tragedy is therefore possible in that it "discovers what remains of the divine image in man and contrasts the original perfection of that image with man's present fallen state." As well as revealing his present weakness and pride, however, it may show man coming to a humble knowledge of his dependence on supernatural grace.[27]

Bryant works out this theory in terms of the tragedies of Shakespeare. Hamlet's tragic fault is the desire for personal revenge, which causes him to disobey the Ghost's commission that he kill without "tainting his mind," i.e. that he act impersonally, without hatred, as God's minister of justice against Claudius. It is only in the last two acts that he comes to realize his sinfulness and his common fallibility with all men. Othello's fault is that he allows Iago, who plays the satanic tempter, to goad him into usurping the prerogative of God and

[27]Bryant, Hippolyta's View, pp. 113, 138.

acting as judge and executioner to Desdemona: thus the Moor, who begins the play described in almost divine terms, is enmeshed in the web of evil that Iago prepares for him, and at the end must admit that his life has been a "vain boast."[28] Macbeth's fault is that, after having heard the prophecies of the Weird Sisters, he pre-empts the rule of God's providence and tries to fulfill the prophecies himself. This, Bryant points out with evidence from Elizabethan homilies and sermons, is no less than apostasy, revolt against God, which is utterly damning because the apostate refuses to repent. As a result Macbeth lives out the rest of his life in a living "hell" of his own devising which leads him to feel trapped, restless, and finally despairing. Bryant also labels Antony and Cleopatra a tragedy, though his portrait of Antony as generous, honest, obedient to his superiors--a paragon of manly virtues--seems to outshine his description of Antony's loss of his "worthiest self" for the extravagant love of Cleopatra. On her part, Cleopatra is transformed by the death of Antony into a mature and noble woman, brave and ready to die in dignity rather than submit to an insensitive Caesar.[29]

[28]Bryant, Hippolyta's View, p. 150.

[29]I have sketched out only the barest outline of Bryant's treatment of the tragedies. Much of his analysis is taken up with pointing out biblical references, echoes, and analogies: for instance, the Claudius story is parallel to that of Cain killing his brother; in Othello, not only is Iago parallel to the devil and Othello a false parallel to God, but Desdemona, like Christ, is the pure innocent victim, and Cassio, like Adam, is saved because of her death. I have also omitted discussion of Bryant's essays on Cymbeline and The Winter's Tale, which, as tragi-comedies, include more of the Christian story, final reconciliation and joy as well as the initial fall.

Many of the arguments that critics use against the possibility of Christian tragedy, it is fascinating to notice, are also used to argue for such a possibility. I would judge that the man who probably began the modern defense of Christian tragedy, in the 1930's (and thus prompted some of the negative criticism surveyed above), was the Shakespearean critic G. Wilson Knight, whose criticism along with that of his disciples has been dubbed "The School of Knight."[30] In an often-quoted theoretical justification of his approach to tragedy, Knight compares tragedy to the Mass, citing the anthropologists' view that both grew out of pagan rituals:

> The king was important in pagan ritual; his life, the life of the community; his death, their death; his renewal, their redemption and resurrection. In paganism too we have the dying and resurrected god. In Christianity we find these themes blended, with a king not of temporal but of spiritual power and authority and one whose sacrifice is a consciously willed act wherein ritual and ethic become one. In the New Testament the Christ's kingship is contrasted with temporal royalty, with Herod and Caesar; and yet again is itself given the tragic insignia of purple, the proclamation written over the cross and the crown of thorns. These are the two kingships whose interpenetration recurs continually in Shakespeare. In the Christian Mass we act over again Christ's sacrifice, remembering it as a willed and purposeful self-surrender. We are to feed on the bread and wine of that once-given sacrificial act; and afterwards, the praise, the opening hope, the remembered resurrection of the Christ and renewal of ourselves. In the world

[30]The label, affixed pejoratively by Roland M. Frye in Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine (Princeton, N. J., 1963), p. 19, is nonetheless memorable. Frye lists, among others, S. L. Bethell, Nevil Coghill, Paul N Siegel, Irving Ribner, and J. C. Bryant as members of this school, but implies that Knight's methodology is more or less typical.

> of Shakespearian tragedy this unique act of the Christ sacrifice can, if we like, be felt as central. Shakespeare gives us a human and infinitely varying interpretation of the sacrificial ceremony, but the relation is important.

The theory covers not only the individual tragic play but the overall pattern of Shakespeare's work, for he continues: "Moreover, Shakespeare's final plays celebrate the victory and the glory, the resurrection and the renewal, that in the Christian story and in its reflection in Christian ritual succeed the sacrifice."[31]

We have seen that the major objection to Christian tragedy was that the final victory of Christ transcended the tragic dilemma and defeat. Some critics, like Reinhold Niebuhr, feel that this precludes tragedy altogether; others, like Battenhouse, hold that tragedy is a permissible part of the Christian story but not all of it. What Knight does is look at the structure of tragedy as displaying the entire Christian story, including the final victory; thus the tragic hero is seen as a "miniature Christ" undergoing a calvary and a subsequent ascent.[32] This theory is especially important for the criticism in The Wheel of Fire. In Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, for instance, Knight asserts that Duke Vincentio is a Christ-figure, and the play is viewed as analogous to Jesus' parables. Othello, in

[31]"Shakespeare and Ritual," Shakespearian Production (Evanston, 1964), pp. 157-158. The essay was originally published under the title Principles of Shakespearian Production (London, 1936).

[32]Knight, Shakespearian Production, p. 157.

the last scene, is victorious rather than defeated by Iago: "His ravings are not final: he rises beyond them. He slays Desdemona finally not so much in rage, as for 'the cause' (V.ii.346). He slays her in love." Lear is a tragedy close to comedy; the play is "purgatorial"--at the end there emerges "a religion born of disillusionment, suffering, and sympathy." So at the end the good forces, not the evil, win. And Timon of Athens becomes at the last Christ-like, suffering for the pains of all men and finding a paradise above the world.[33]

The major weakness of Knight's stress on the triumph and optimism of tragedy is that it blurs the distinction between tragedy and tragicomedy or comedy. Many other Christian Critics, who along with Knight would argue that Christianity and tragedy are compatible, avoid this weakness: they place more emphasis on the negative side of the tragic experience while at the same time denying that this negativity severs tragedy from Christianity. Against those who claim that Christianity offers release and compensation from death and suffering (and thus transcends tragedy), A. F. Glencross argues that the Christian faith does not do away with suffering and death. Shakespeare's Macbeth cries out against death, feeling that it is really evil. Cleopatra at the end scorns the mundane world, but feels, like Macbeth, that death involves a real physical loss without any compensatory reward

[33]London, 1930, pp. 130, 209, 259, 262.

for life. It could be argued that neither Macbeth nor Cleopatra is a Christian: but the fact is that the saint deserves death even less than they do; furthermore, any Christian possesses "widened experience and a greater intensity of life; that this should submit and dissolve in the sweet sickliness of death is tragedy at its most fearful." It is true that Christianity teaches that no suffering is ultimately wasted, and that no evil is "finally and under God . . . an evil," but the individual Christian, after all, does not have God's perspective, and experiences suffering and death as humanly real enough: even Christ experienced them. And it is out of such human experience that tragedy is written.[34]

A somewhat similar perspective is held by David E. Roberts, who takes those critics to task who claim that classic tragedy rests in the fact that life is full of perplexities and injustices, whereas Christianity escapes from the tragic dilemma by insisting that suffering and despair are swallowed up in God's victory. Roberts proceeds to argue that the Greek tragedians were not satisfied with a mere iteration of the unsolvable inequities of the human condition; instead, they attempted to show the interaction between men and the gods, the human and divine wills. In Aeschylus, it is true, the audience was to see the vengefulness of Zeus in Prometheus Bound; but it was also

[34]"Christian Tragedy," A Christian Approach to Western Literature, ed. Aloysius A. Norton and Joan T. Nourse (Westminster, Md., 1961), pp. 67-68.

to see that Prometheus was a rebel against heaven. In the Oresteia the audience was to see that Antigone and Orestes were pursued by the Furies in the very act of remaining faithful to sacred duty. There is mystery here--mystery at the point where human resources fail and any resolution of the dilemma "lies in an everlasting mercy for which men can do little more than hope."[35] In Sophocles human character and motivation are more important, but here, too, we see human suffering (as in the case of Oedipus) which cannot be equated with human sin; but this causes Sophocles to look through the riddle of human existence to the divine harmony beyond, to go beyond desperation to reconciliation, as Oedipus did upon finding that he was the object of his own curse, and as the entire play Oedipus at Colonus demonstrates. In Euripides the orthodox religious answers are no longer considered adequate; but even here we have a kind of appeal through the human predicament to the insistence that if there were a divine will, it must be morally good, it must ratify human reason and human compassion rather than violate them. There is also (and here Euripides is a "modern") a search for an "aesthetic" faith as an alternative to religious faith: since religious certitude is impossible and comfort derived from faith therefore unsure, let poetry refine beauty from suffering.

[35]"Christian Faith and Greek Tragedy," Religion in Life, XVIII (1948), 83.

In none of the Athenian dramatists--not even in Euripides--is there the kind of nihilism that some contemporary theorists of tragedy insist upon, who call for the necessity of courageous despair in the face of an irremediable human plight. All three of the great tragedians would hold that there is no neat theological or philosophical system that accounts for the complex and sometimes inexplicable interweaving of fate and responsibility, despair and faith, and that any peace or salvation is to be reached not by sudden leaps of faith into empyrean serenity but by passing through the "fiery whirlwind" of human ambiguities. Roberts thus posits a dualism between the human and divine perspectives which is somewhat like that of the Protestant Neo-Calvinist theologians, though it is not as absolute as that advanced by Glencross, since one may apprehend experience redemptively and thereby transcend it. This ameliorated dualism is not, as some would have it, disconsonant with the Christian faith; and here Roberts points to the experience of Christ as his authority. "Trust cannot really triumph unless the full strength of its opponent, despair, is brought to light and recognized," he asserts. "Indeed, it is only through travail of heart and conscience that Christians have a right to look for fellowship with God. For at the center of the gospel is the fact that God himself stands beyond tragedy only by passing through it with us."[36]

[36]David E. Roberts, "Christian Faith and Greek Tragedy," pp. 87-88.

This "passing through" full human despair is the characteristic dimension of tragedy, according to William Lynch. The impact of beauty and exaltation which awes the spectator of tragedy is not brought about by way of beauty but by way of a descent into the utter depth of human existence, he writes. Accordingly, we see in the great tragedies a line of dramatic movement from great energy in the first acts to a point towards the end where all energy is depleted, and the human will broken. With Oedipus we begin with a confident king speaking in full iambs, and at the close we have a poor, ruined, stuttering man who is unable to complete the last poetic foot. So with Shakespeare's protagonists: Macbeth, for instance, greets the witches' warnings with scorn, but eventually refers to life as "a walking shadow" that struts for a moment and is heard no more. Lynch observes that the region of the tragic is "a place where the human spirit 'dies' in frequent real helplessness," where human will and strength are seen to be inadequate. It is also what the theologian calls the place of faith, for only upon "dying" will the human mind "consent to put on the mind of God . . . and thus rise to a higher knowledge and insight."[37]

Christianity, as we have noted, is often blamed for blunting the tragic dilemma and making for comedy and romance. Lynch argues that it is rather the modern attempts at tragedy which actually bypass tragedy by asserting a romantically humanistic triumph on the part of

[37]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, p. 79.

the hero. Playwrights like Ibsen, Maxwell Anderson, and Eugene O'Neill refuse to allow their heroes the necessary descent into despair, and in the final acts of their plays they tack on some improbable angelic leap into the infinite. At the end of Enemy of the People Dr. Stockman cries out, as Oedipus could not have cried: "The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." At the end of Anderson's Winterset, Esdras says to the dead boy:

> And Mio-Mio, my son, know this where you be,
> This is the glory of earth-born men and women.
> Not to cringe, never to yield, but standing
> Take defeat implacable and defiant
> Die unsubmitting.

The same "angelic leap" is evident in O'Neill's Lazarus Laughed, where Lazarus' continual crying out Yes, Yes, Yes and his continual laughing become merely monotonous. These heroes, however, have not earned the dignity and courage and transcendence ascribed to them at the last.[38]

A much fuller and to me more satisfying exposition of tragedy which incorporates the theory of Lynch and also takes into account the recent work of Francis Fergusson and Murray Krieger is offered by Nathan A. Scott, Jr. The essential myth or fable which shapes tragedy, he observes, describes a schism, a split between existential experience and the idea of good or justice in the world: "that congruence between the highest aspirations of the human spirit and its world-environment,

[38]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, pp. 70-73, 85-86.

apart from which existence seems utterly futile, is no longer discernible, and the protagonist finds himself adrift in a rudderless bark whose passage is through deeps uncharted and unconsoling." So with Job and Oedipus and Ahab we have the feeling that there is only a sense that the universe is unjust and wasteful. The result for the tragic hero is moral "nausea and vertigo" at the collapse of the world's order. He is seized with anxiety and dread, which drive him to seek alleviation and release by a radical and defiant assertion of himself "against the boundary-lines of his existence in an effort to summon out of the innermost depths of reality some promise of the possibility of his being finally accommodated."[39] But this self-assertion of value, whether it be in terms of enlightenment, as with Prometheus, or punishment of regicide, as with Oedipus, or the encounter with cosmic malignity, as with Ahab, is inevitably partial because the tragic protagonist's vision is necessarily incomplete and finite: therefore in his attempt to transcend his agony he makes wrong decisions and brings guilt on himself, and consequent suffering as punishment. Hybris, then, is not properly seen as egotistical pride but the "presumptuousness" of the protagonist in daring to assert himself. Here Scott draws on Francis Fergusson's schema of Purpose, Passion, and Perception. The Purpose is the defiance of the protagonist;

[39]"The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith," The Broken Center, pp. 122-123, 126.

the Passion is the agony into which he is thrown as his assertion does not match the facts of his experience; the Perception is the final disenchantment that human life is defeated and doomed.[40] Thus to Fergusson as well as to many other recent theoreticians of tragedy, some of whom have been dealt with above, the tragic vision is "an unpalliated vision of shock and crisis, and of man in the extremest possible situation where all guarantees of meaning and security in his pilgrimage on earth have disappeared," a view which clashes with the notion that tragedy issues in a cathartic reconciliation between man and the universe. How then, asks Scott, are we to choose between the two views? He does not choose between them; he accepts them both with the help of Murray Krieger's distinction between the ultimate absurdity of the tragic vision as experienced, say, by the hero of Kafka's The Trial, and the more affirmative view of tragic form: "Even when the final scene on the tragedian's stage is a scene of wreckage, woe, and utter defeat, the disaster and the doom are not altogether unbearable. For the very fact that tragedy is an aesthetic form means that what is substantive--the tragic vision--has been shaped, has been contained."[41]

[40]Scott, The Broken Center, pp. 129-130. Scott has reference to Fergusson's The Idea of a Theater (Princeton, N. J., 1949).

[41]Scott, The Broken Center, pp. 131, 134-135. Krieger's distinction appears in his book The Tragic Vision (New York, 1960).

In this way Scott is able to offer an answer in the debate over the possibility of Christian tragedy. Since the very aesthetic form of tragedy "must in some measure conciliate or resolve the dissonances of the tragic vision, it will achieve this transcendence only by invoking some principle of healing and redemption," and is consonant with the Christian principle of redemption. But the tragic vision, as distinct from the tragic form, is not so easily harmonized with Christianity, as theorists like Karl Jaspers have recognized. However, the position of critics like Jaspers does not take into account several aspects of Christian theology. First, Jaspers ignores "the vibrant eschatological tension that is so much a part of the Gospel."[42] On the one hand, the Church declares that Christ has already accomplished the victory over the evil forces, and has already established peace between God and man. Christ the Eschaton, the End, has already arrived; the "New Age" has begun. On the other hand, the Church's faith is one of anticipation. Though Christ has come, man's life is still marked by sin and suffering, and the Church waits the final fulfillment of the Gospel promise; in this sense the End is not yet.[43]

[42]Scott, The Broken Center, pp. 135, 137.

[43]Scott, The Broken Center, p. 138. Cf. the remark of the American literature scholar Hyatt H. Waggoner, which has eschatological overtones: "Unlike Whitmanic optimism, Christianity does not bypass or deny tragedy, but neither does it rest in the final tragic dilemma: it holds that 'in the end,' when all things are made manifest, it will become apparent that perfect power and perfect love are one. Tragedy has been once and will be again transcended: it is, as it were, an interim condition--perhaps better, the purely human condition" ("William Faulkner's Passion Week of the Heart," The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, p. 321).

What, though, is to be said to those Christians who hold a "realized" eschatology--the position, developed by the British biblical scholar C. H. Dodd, that the "End" has "already entered the historical process in Jesus Christ"?[44] Here Scott appeals to the prototype of Christ, whose life does not exhibit a lordship of power and glory but of humility and suffering and service, in which the Christian must join. This is not the pattern only of Christ's life but also of the Eucharist in which the believer participates here and now, offering up his own life in conjunction with the sacrifice of Christ, so that "what is tragically broken in life is taken up and absorbed into the great Eucharistic action of offering, consecration, and communion, whereby the self-oblation of the Church becomes one with Christ's own oblation of Himself for our redemption."[45] This does not only mean, as Reinhold Niebuhr suggests, that suffering is overcome at the Cross, for at the Cross (and its representation in time, the Eucharist) there meet the present life in the world, characterized by sin and death, and the mystery of the Kingdom of God, characterized by victory and joy. Man is not magically carried off to some heavenly sphere and released from the responsibility of this world; he receives grace to live in this world, through which he must pass before he can

[44]Scott, The Broken Center, p. 139. See Dodd's The Apostolic Preaching (Chicago, 1937) and History and the Gospel (New York, 1938)--Scott.

[45]Scott, The Broken Center, p. 141.

glimpse any other. Thus, though the Christian cannot be content with an unmitigated tragic vision, Christianity and tragedy are not absolutely antithetical.

A more biblical approach is evident in E. J. Tinsley's Christian Theology and the Frontiers of Tragedy.[46] Tinsley takes issue with the position exemplifed by Laurence Michel, that Old Testament religion is tragic but that New Testament religion is not. Tinsley does recognize "tragic elements" in the Old Testament, which include the lack in most of the Old Testament of a belief in life after death, as well as "a nervous insecurity about the adequacy and finality of atonement. Sacrificial atonement availed only for those within the Covenant of Israel and even there for sins not done 'with a high hand'." But these elements are eventually overcome by a faith which can "leap through tragedy." This leap was made possible by two strains in Hebrew religion: (1) "the belief that the universe is created and therefore redeemable" and (2) "the eschatology of a religion of promise and the hope which this caused to be born again and again." Tinsley does agree that the New Testament is "beyond tragedy," yet this does not mean that the tragic dimension is removed from the Christian life. He quotes St. Paul, who refers to the Christian life as a "dying and

[46] Leeds, England, 1963. By "biblical" I mean that Scott's categories are philosophical, literary, and liturgical, while Tinsley's strategy is that of a biblical theologian.

rising" with Christ; this typifies the New Testament attitude that "belief does take a man through and beyond the tragic, but compassion involves a re-entry into the tragic experience. This is why the kenosis of the Son of God in the Incarnation, his pouring himself out as a libation, becomes for a St Paul the model of the Christian experience."[47]

Tinsley then examines the theological climate for clues as to why Christianity and tragedy have been thought antithetical. He first castigates classical theology as being too Hellenic in its emphasis on divine impassibility, the idea that God is incapable of suffering. The Christology which emerged from the early Ecumenical Councils was also Hellenic; it established that Jesus was the Son of God from all eternity and consubstantial with the Father, then attempted to apply the idea of impassibility also to Christ so that only in his human nature did he suffer, not in the divine.[48] It has only been in recent decades that theological emphasis has been placed on the complete participation of Christ in human tragic experience.[49] A second factor

[47]Tinsley, Christian Theology and the Frontiers of Tragedy, pp. 8-10.

[48]The Christology of E. I. Watkin, above, is clearly in this tradition.

[49]See, for example, Nicolas Berdyaev in The Destiny of Man: "Tragic conflict in the life of the Deity is a sign of the perfection, and not of the imperfection, of the divine life. The Christian revelation shows us God in the aspect of sacrificial love, but sacrificial love, far from suggesting self-sufficiency, implies the need for passing into its 'other'. It is impossible to deny that the Christian God is first and foremost, the God of sacrificial love, and sacrifice always indicates tragedy. Dramatic movement and tragedy are born of the fullness, and not of the

in Christian thinking about tragedy has been the recent drift towards Pelagianism, the attitude towards man that he is morally perfectible and does not need atonement. The idea of original sin, "which sees man as both victim and culprit," is necessary to the tragic view but has been unpopular in modern times. Thirdly, the tendency to universalism, the belief that all men will eventually be saved, has made the tragic view unpalatable.[50]

It has probably been evident that many of the critics who defend the possibility of a Christian tragedy have regarded ancient Greek tragedy as the model of the genre. Let us now look at two theorists who are interested in pointing out the differences between Greek and Christian tragedy. One is W. H. Auden, who draws distinctions regarding (1) freedom of the will, and (2) the nature of tragic hubris. On freedom he writes: "Greek tragedy is the tragedy of necessity; i.e., the feeling aroused in the spectator is 'What a pity it had to be this way'; Christian tragedy is the tragedy of possibility, 'What a pity it was this way when it might have been otherwise.'" On hubris: "the hubris which is the flaw in the Greek hero's character is the illusion of a man who knows himself strong and believes that nothing can shake

---

poverty of life. To deny tragedy in the Divine life is only possible at the cost of denying Christ, His cross and crucifixion, the sacrifice of the Son of God" (pp. 28-29).

[50]Tinsley, Christian Theology and Frontiers of Tragedy, pp. 18-19.

that strength, while the corresponding Christian sin of Pride is the illusion of a man who knows himself weak but believes he can by his own efforts transcend that weakness and become strong."[51] The Greek tragic hero begins in arete, but plunges into exceptional suffering: "He suffers because he has come into collision, not with other individuals, but with the universal law of righteousness. As a rule, however, the actual violation of which he is guilty is not his own conscious choice in the sense that he could have avoided it. The typical Greek tragic situation is one in which whatever the hero does must be wrong." It is wrong because he is guilty of an overweening self-confidence with which he believes he is a god who cannot suffer.[52] This is, moreover, the necessary condition of the hero: if one is a hero he must therefore be guilty of hubris and be punished by the gods. The suffering which results is an expiation for his sin, though it is solely up to the gods to decide when his expiation is sufficient.

The fate of the Christian tragic hero, in contrast, is one of choice, as Auden illustrates by way of Melville's Captain Ahab. At the beginning of Moby Dick Ahab is what the Greek hero, like Oedipus, is at the end: exceptionally unfortunate. In the Greek tragedy this misfortune would have been a punishment; here it is an opportunity for

[51]"The Christian Tragic Hero," The New York Times Book Review, December 16, 1945, p. 1.

[52]"Introduction," The Portable Greek Reader (New York, 1950), pp. 21, 23.

Ahab to choose good or evil: temptation to the Christian hero is an occasion for grace.[53] It is in making the wrong choice initially and persisting in wrong choices that Ahab refuses grace and brings punishment on himself. Therefore Auden can say about the Christian hero that suffering leads to self-blindness, defiance, and hatred; of Shakespeare's tragedies he asserts that they might be termed "variations on the same tragic myth, the only one which Christianity possesses, the story of the unrepentant thief."[54]

The most carefully constructed theory of Christian tragedy, in my judgment, is that of Preston T. Roberts, Jr., a colleague of Nathan A. Scott, Jr. at the University of Chicago who is oriented towards the Neo-Aristotelian school of criticism rather than the New Criticism, as Scott is. At the outset of his essay Roberts acknowledges his special debt to Aristotle's Poetics as "still the best work in literary criticism in the West." But since the Poetics came out of the context of Greek theology there are in it theological elements to which the Christian must of necessity object, particularly "the notion of God as

[53]The Dyer's Hand, p. 175. This remark is made of the Shakespearean hero but is relevant also to Ahab.

[54]Auden, The Dyer's Hand, p. 175. The moral reprobation of the tragic hero raises serious problems about how he can be made sympathetic. Shakespeare and Racine, Auden claims, tried to accomplish this by assigning him "noble poetry," though "both of them must have known in their heart of hearts that this was a conjuring trick." He concludes that "a completely satisfactory tragedy" is probably impossible in a Christian society (The Dyer's Hand, pp. 176-177).

an ideal rather than as an actual entity, the divine spectator alone with himself thinking about thought, viewing the course of events without passion from above and beyond and apart; the notion of man as a primarily intellectual and sensitive as opposed to a passionate and wilful being, a being whose inherent nobility is imprisoned within a bodily and emotional frame; and an emphasis upon the aesthetic and intellectual as opposed to the moral, the political, and the religious virtues."[55] The Christian view also is to be differentiated from the modern skepticism which denies God and human responsibility; plays displaying this mentality comprise, with the Greek and Christian, a third type of drama.

Out of the Greek milieu grew Aristotle's concept of the tragic hero, which is too aristocratic for the Christian, and the interpretation of hamartia as an intellectual mistake rather than a moral sin, which is peculiarly Greek. Then Roberts moves to answer the familiar objections that Christianity lifts man beyond tragedy, and that therefore other forms of drama (e.g. the epic and the comic) more fully deal with the Christian story. The first objection arises, he maintains, from a theological misconception which fails to take into account the fact that there is always a hiatus between the theological possibility and the human actuality: no one rises too high to fall, or falls too

[55]"A Christian Theory of Dramatic Tragedy," The New Orpheus, pp. 256, 258.

low for redemption. His own theological immanentism would, as well, clash with such a transcendental approach. He believes that "the Christian story as a whole and in all its parts is wholly concerned with something within this given and actual world and does not involve any essential reference beyond life and history to another possible or impossible one." On the other hand, the Christian play is not purely a realistic event but a symbolic joining of "what is actual in this life with what is possible for it and what is possible for this life with what is actual in it." The second objection arises from too narrow a notion of what tragedy is. Tragedy is not purely tragic, not merely despair and doom; some tragedies "turn upon the theme of man's idolatry and pretension rather than upon the theme of man's suffering nobility or piteous abnormality. They move from fate to freedom, from defeat to victory, from doom to grace, and from tragedy to peace."[56]

As for the Christian tragic hero, he is modelled on Christ and is both related to the world and to other people in a way in which the towering and solitary Greek tragic hero, modelled on the removed and transcendent Greek deity, is not; but there are also moments when the Christian tragic hero is free to regard or betray himself, others, the world, or God. By dint of this freedom he is susceptible to moral guilt and religious sin. The misuse of freedom constitutes his hamartia or flaw, whereas the Greek tragic hero is ignorant or finite, and the

[56]Preston Roberts, pp. 268, 265.

modern skeptical play would have its protagonist perverted, inert, or weak. Also, because of the intellectual nature of Greek hamartia the discovery scene will probably come after the tragic deed, not before it. In the Christian play (e.g. Macbeth) the flaw is a matter of guilt and sin, not ignorance, and the recognition scene precedes the tragic deed. In the course of the play, the Christian tragic hero moves in the recognition scene "from knowledge, through temptation, to sin" and in the reversal "from judgment to forgiveness." This is a movement beyond tragedy only in the sense that he experiences joy even in the midst of agony and pain. To the Greek, however, there is no salvation within history, no good news--he dies like Oedipus, "unreconciled to the real God or life and history." Similarly, the modern skeptical hero dies "defiant, weary, and melancholy, cursing the day wherein he was born."[57]

The plot of the Christian play is, in contrast to the fatal and determined Greek play, "open" at the beginning, middle, and end. It has a real beginning, with "relevant possibilities and real alternatives in the initial situation." There is a real middle: "the individualities involved in a Christian plot begin as effects facing the past and end as causes facing the future." And there is a real end: "There is an appropriation of the dead by the living. What is divested of living immediacy becomes immortal by presenting itself

[57]Preston Roberts, pp. 278, 270, 284, 281.

to what follows as a final or persuasive cause and by determining what is to follow as an efficient or coercive cause. In this sense every beginning is an end, and every end is a beginning . . . . The end is therefore more than a denouement or something after which there is nothing. In losing his life, the tragic hero finds it."

The effect of the Christian play is neither the pity and terror of the Greek nor the poignance and despair of the skeptical play but "a sense of judgment and forgiveness"--judgment, for "the tragic deed has involved moral guilt and religious sin and because the consequences of the tragic deed are often less than this specifiable guilt and sin." Forgiveness, for "a conjunction between God's grace and man's repentance and faith in part redeem that which has been betrayed and forsaken."[58]

Theology also influences the function of foils and the chorus. In the Greek play only the tragic hero, solitary and transcendent, one against the many, is likely to be round; the minor characters are flat. But to Christianity all men are children of God; therefore all the characters, common and uncommon--even the porter in Macbeth, the fool in Lear, the soldiers in Henry V, are alive, are "terribly real and moving at some point and moment, undergoing their own tragedy and finding their own peace."[59]

[58]Preston Roberts, pp. 272-273.

[59]Preston Roberts, pp. 278-279.

Perhaps, as a kind of postscript, I should not neglect to mention the very scholarly and systematic book by T. R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy. I shall deal with his discussion of hybris, tragic death and rebirth, and the tragic effect, as he relates them to Christianity. Henn denies the distinction sometimes made between Greek metaphysical hybris and Christian moral hybris. Drawing on the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, Henn claims that for Christianity as well as tragedy, hybris is not ethical but metaphysical, inherent in man's finitude: "man as spirit transcends the natural and temporal process in which he is involved and also transcends himself. Thus his freedom is the basis for his creativity but it is also his temptation."[60] When man attempts to deny his finitude, he blinds and deceives himself, and conflict arises which produces suffering.[61] This can be seen in such differing tragic protagonists as Antigone, Faustus and Faust, Macbeth, and Peer Gynt, each illustrating Niebuhr's observation in his own way.

But this one similarity does not imply that tragedy can be regarded as a substitute for religion, for religion posits, as Karl Jaspers recognizes, "worlds beyond tragedy." A better way to regard the relationship between tragedy and Christianity, Henn feels, is to look at tragedy as a lesser analogy to Christianity in terms of their patterns

[60]Rev. ed. (New York, 1966), p. 74; quoted from Niebuhr's The Nature and Destiny of Man.

[61]Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, pp. 76-77.

of death and rebirth, and their effect on the spectator. The ending of tragedy shows a resolution of tragic conflict between creature and his creaturehood: see, for example, Lear's "Prithee, undo this button," Creon's call to a cabinet meeting at the end of Anouilh's Antigone, the Chorus's last lines in the Hippolytus and Samson Agonistes, or Charmian's last lines at the end of Antony and Cleopatra:

> Downy windows, close;
> And golden Phoebus never be beheld
> Of eyes again so royal! Your crown's awry;
> I'll mend it, and then play.[62]

Yet the resolution is not final but projects, "out of the unification which it suggests, the sense of continuity and re-birth." This is of a lesser order, but in some sense it is complementary to the Christian belief in immortality. Finally, the tragic stimulus to pity and fear is parallel to religious experience. "The awakening of pity seems the first step . . . to a sense of Christian charity: that of fear, a necessary state of mind to our readiness to consider the idea of the numinous; both together forcing us to confront a series of ethical problems which have their solution only in faith." Pity and fear also turn us outward from our egocentricity and involve us in compassion and co-suffering. Compassion or co-suffering is a response which is central to Christianity, because the redemption of mankind was motivated by Christ's love, "itself the last perfection of compassion."[63]

[62]V.ii.316; quoted in Henn, p. 268.

[63]Henn, pp. 268, 290-291, 78.

The Comic

There is less theological theorizing about comedy than about tragedy, but here too there is the idea that the Christian religion and comedy are incompatible. E. I. Watkin, who (we saw) opposed the idea of Christian tragedy, also opposes the idea of Christian comedy to the utter seriousness of Christianity. Commenting on T. S. Eliot's The Cocktail Party, he writes:

> If comedy is seen in the light of religious truth, the spectacle of man's immortal spirit in its relation to the eternal God, only the superficial comedy of circumstance or manners remains to amuse us. The deeper comedy of characters, of perversity, inconsistency and folly, ceases to be comic. For it is seen to be the serious matter that the responsible choice of a spirit must be. The only comedy, for example, in Mr. T. S. Eliot's Christian morality The Cocktail Party, is on the surface. The substance of the play, the moral choice of Edward, Lavinia, and Celia, is not comic. In Celia's case it involves an agonizing death. If the playwright is in earnest when he calls his play a comedy, he must understand the term only in the sense of Dante's Divine Comedy, that its ending viewed sub specie aeternitatis is happy--the redemption of an unsuccessful marriage by mutual unselfishness and humility, and for Celia the martyr's crown.[64]

Among those theorists who do hold that Christianity and comedy are compatible there seem to be two divergent lines of thinking. P. T. Forsyth sees the comic as an exaltation of man's mind or spirit over against his body, his worldliness. Forsyth, as we saw earlier in

[64]Watkin, Poets and Mystics, p. 41.

Chapter Four, relies heavily on the aesthetic of Hegel, from whom he has learned that two new features which appeared in Christian art were (1) the tendency to the fantastic, the exuberant, and the childish (like the spouts of cathedrals), which passes into (2) the grotesque or the humorous. In ancient comedy, which tended toward satire, there was little humor. The tone was intellectual and dry rather than sympathetic or extravagant. The humor of Christian drama, in contrast, is "of a loving, sympathetic, and pitiful sort; the wit does twinkle, it does not merely flash; and the laugh lies much nearer to the spring of tears than anything antiquity can show. The hard gaiety of the old world is replaced by kindly humour in the new."[65]

This alteration in humor can be traced to three sources: (1) A new power and freedom infused by Christianity into the human spirit. Consequently there was a new disposition to revel, free from the restraints of taste and law, for the sake of mere fun. (2) A new sense of sympathy and kindness which men experienced in feeling they were redeemed, no longer dogged by mysterious Fate or avenging Furies. (3) A new sense of the greatness of God, of life, of the soul:

> Such humour is one of the modes in which man views the huge disparity between the finite world and the infinite beyond. In some moods this is a solemn reflection, or it leads to the classic irony which saw all things in the idea, and yet all things as nothing in the idea. In certain states it finds

[65]Forsyth, Christ on Parnassus, p. 90.

> expression and relief in laughter. The world's pettiness at one moment irritates us, and at another, measured against the world's vast and blessed issues, it moves us to a smile, now tender only, now tender and grim (as in Carlyle). United in spirit ourselves with the Infinite and Eternal, we see the trivialities of life as Gulliver watched the Lilliputians climbing over his boots.[66]

Unlike Forsyth, who stresses the comic as a transcendence of the human condition, the other Christian commentators on comedy stress, in various ways, the involvement of the comic in the human, the physical, the earthly.

W. H. Auden, who differentiates, as we have seen, between Greek and Christian tragedy, makes a similar distinction between classical and Christian comedy which recalls Forsyth in some respects. Classical comedy, observes Auden, was relatively narrow in scope, being based on the sociological division of man into "those who have arete and those who do not." Only the latter, "fools, shameless rascals, slaves," are proper for comedy. A Christian society is a much more amenable environment for comedy, allowing it more breadth and depth. It allows for more breadth, because Christianity believes that all men are sinful: "no one, therefore, whatever his rank or talents, can claim immunity from the comic exposure and, indeed, the more virtuous, in the Greek sense, a man is, the more he realizes that he deserves to be exposed." It allows for more depth, because Christianity forbids

[66]Forsyth, p. 93.

looking down on others and judging them; it rather enjoins forgiveness and does not support the classic practice of exposing the comic rascals. Therefore, Auden notes, when the classical comedy ends the audience feels superior to the characters and laughs at them, while with Christian comedy the members of the audience, realizing that they too are sinners, are sympathetic and laugh with them.[67]

The approach to comedy of William Lynch, like that of Auden, eschews the class division of ancient comedy and with it the "division of styles" by which, according to Erich Auerbach, the common, the ordinary, the "realistic," were reserved for the comic low style which was not felt to have serious depth.[68] Lynch's view is precisely the opposite: for him comedy deals with the common, the ordinary, the finite more concretely and more densely than any other art--even more than tragedy, which can dissolve into nihilism or heroism as an escape from finitude. Comedy is "completely, unblinkingly cognitive, entering into [the finite] without deception, facing the actual with a great form of courage, the courage of the comic." The perspective of comedy is to diminish; it makes what it focuses on "a disconcertingly small puddle" but closely scrutinizes "the actual contours, the interstices, the smells, of the beastly man. For instance, there is the inescapable realism of Prince Hal when in 1 Henry IV he speaks of

[67]Auden, The Dyer's Hand, pp. 176-177.

[68]Auerbach, Mimesis, p. 31.

Falstaff as "that trunk of humours, that bolting hutch of beastliness, that swoll'n parcel of dropsies, that huge bombard of sack, that stuff'd cloakbag of guts, that roasted Manningtree ox with the pudding in his belly, that reverend vice, that grey iniquity, that father ruffian, that vanity in years." Or there is Aristophanes' puncturing of stylistic pretensions when, in The Frogs, he has Euripides say to Aeschylus: "Never does their passion see anything to be blamed in it, and everything to them becomes amiable in the object beloved; they reckon blemishes as perfections, and know how to give favorably [sic] names to 'em. The pale vies with the jessamy in fairness; the black, even to a frightful degree, is an adorable brunette; the lean has shape and easiness; the fat has a portliness full of majesty . . . 'tis thus that a lover loves . . . ."[69]

Comedy thus destroys man's "angelic" pretensions, his sophistications, his claims to pure intelligence. It also ridicules his "pseudo-comic" roles. There is (1) the Chaplinesque self-pitying clown, who cannot survive the victory of man implied by the resurrection. There is (2) the meticulous and fastidious man, as George Bernard Shaw reveals himself to be when he ridicules churches in Italy, and specifically "the average Italian priest, personally uncleanly, and with chronic catarrh of the nose and throat, produced and maintained

[69]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, pp. 94-96.

by sleeping in frowsy, ill-ventilated rooms, punctuating his gabbled Latin only by expectorative hawking, and making the decent guest sicken and shiver every time the horrible splash of spitten mucus echoes along the valuting from the marble steps of the altar: this unseemly wretch should be seized and put out, bell, book, candle, and all, until he learns to behave himself."[70] There is (3) the Sartrean man who belches with disgust at the world; such is Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream, who is interested in transforming the human into something else--usually worse. Finally, there is the diabolical poseur who hates the human and laughs at what is ultimately serious; such a one is Thomas Mann's Adrian Leverkuhn, who lives only on the intellectual level and makes fun of everything.

In short, comedy is a kind of amnesis, a remembrance of our contingency, our fallenness and createdness before God.[71] It works

[70]Quoted in Lynch, Christ and Apollo, pp. 101-102, from Shaw's An Essay on Going to Church (Boston, 1905), pp. 50-51.

[71]Barry Ulanov, The Rhetoric of Christian Comedy (W. Hartford, Conn., 1962), makes the same point: "Writers of Christian comedy do not laugh to themselves. They share the laughter. But their weeping is silent, buried beneath great caterwauls of amusement. Fallen man, they keep telling us, is as much a comic as a tragic spectacle. All his vain attempts to wrest some dignity from his low estate only make him a better butt for ridicule, like the poor fellow who slips on the banana peel and then standing high on his self-esteem does not see that the offending skin of the fruit is still where it was--and falls all over again." But in the twentieth century we have taken to considering such ridiculous pretensions serious and admirable, so that "our own behavior is such that we may sometimes find it hard to laugh at 'The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisby' as played by Bottom and his friends. That ass's head on Bottom looks too familiar" (p. 78).

this amnesis by disrupting our so-called rational notions of pattern and logic. Whereas the tragic is ruthlessly logical (the tragic hero moves to full awareness in a tight step-by-step process), comedy recalls the relation of man to God without such logic--and is therefore funny. There are two ways, says Lynch, that comedy takes to accomplish this. It either foreshortens the process by omitting intervening steps and fostering surprises, so that he observes: "Let us not talk of incongruity as the secret clue to comedy, but of congruity, of the tie between the earth and Christ, with all the logic omitted. Why should we laugh or magnify the Lord? Because this is the way things are." Or it multiplies the steps between the beginning and the end; thus "the bewildering vitality of the finite, within the analogical form, goes beyond the logic of tragedy and everything is seen as lively and extraordinarily bouncing."[72] This is the Rube Goldberg technique.

In a long essay entitled "The Bias of Comedy and the Narrow Escape into Faith," Nathan A. Scott, Jr. expatiates on Lynch's theory. He disagrees with Lynch, in passing, about the comic nature of the clown; of Charlie Chaplin's The Tramp, for example, he claims that "we feel that here is the real human thing itself--clothed not in the unearthly magnificence of tragic heroism but in the awkward innocence of essential humanity." But the definition of the comic which Scott proposes is clearly indebted to Lynch:

[72]Lynch, Christ and Apollo, p. 109.

> The comic is a contradiction in the relation of the human individual to the created order of existence; this contradiction arises out of an over-specialization of some instinct or faculty of the self, or out of an inordinate inclination of the self in some special direction, to the neglect of the other avenues through which it ought also to gain expression. This predilection of the self to identify too completely with some special interest or project . . . blinds the self to the integral character of its humanity and thus throws it out of gear with the fundamental norms and orders of human existence. However, in the comic action, this contradiction in the individual's relation to the created orders of life does not involve the spectator in suffering or pity, for he is not led to identify with the protagonist who, indeed, in the course of the action becomes the butt of his laughter.[73]

To the type of comic hero who is unsympathetic, like Volpone or Tartuffe or Dostoyevsky's "underground" man, Scott would add a second type. Don Quixote and Joyce Cary's Gulley Jimson (from The Horse's Mouth)[74] suggest a type of comic protagonist who is heroic and admirable. The nature of the comic catharsis, which involves "such a restoration of our confidence in the realm of finitude as enables us to see the daily occasions of our earth-bound career as being not irrelevant inconveniences but as possible roads into what is ultimately significant in life," is determined by the type of comic protagonist. If he is

[73]The Broken Center, pp. 90, 105-106.

[74]See Douglas Stewart's essay on Joyce Cary in The Ark of God: Studies in Five Modern Novelists (London, 1961). Applying Tillich's terminology in Theology of Culture, Stewart characterizes Cary as "positive-Protestant," for he goes beyond tragedy, "conceiving a world redeemed by love" and affirming, often by the laughter of his heroes, the triumphant goodness of life (pp. 130-131).

unsympathetic, "our awareness of the validity of the human norm from which he has deviated will be renewed and deepened as we see him rendered incompetent by this eccentricity." If he is sympathetic, "the experience of katharsis grows out of the joy we take in the discovery of how stout and gamy the human creature really is."[75]

Scott also explicitly connects this idea of comedy to the doctrines of Creation and Incarnation. The comic confidence in the finite grows, for the Christian, out of his belief that the world was made by God and is therefore, despite man's sinfulness, essentially good. It is also separate from God, a created thing and therefore not "defective" in that it is finite. Into this created world God himself entered, submitting himself to it and thus affirming the value of its materiality and particularity, and also affirming the image of his creature, man, to whose image comedy also, in its way, attests.

Both kinds of comic theory discussed above--the adjectives "transcendental" and "immanent" might be used to differentiate between them--have been called into question by contemporary drama which does not appear to be amenable to Christian (or any other) theorizing. E. J. Tinsley seems to have the transcendental sort of theory in mind when he suggests that "comedy which suggests a stable universe and fixed values, so that one can afford to laugh at the human spectacle, is only one type." Some modern comedy approaches, even closer than

[75]Scott, The Broken Center, p. 108.

tragedy, the brink of nihilistic despair, and can be used to make this nihilism endurable; this may be why, Tinsley speculates, many today prefer this kind of farcical comedy. He cites Friedrich Durrenmatt, who considers comedy the only sort of drama suited to a disbelieving age; it is "a means of learning to face life without any standpoint. Man is no longer seen to have tragic possibilities--that would imply some transcendental reference--and is a pathetic being whose state can best be presented through a new use of the comic routine."[76]

The traditional comedy, which makes one more deeply aware of "the natural norms of human life," is contrasted by Nathan A. Scott, Jr. to contemporary comedy, which comes out of a world where all norms are questionable. In this world, the world, for instance, of Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Endgame, "the logic of comedy does indeed become a logic of disorder, of the grotesque, of the absurd; and the laughter which the comedian supervises takes on a vehemence and shrillness that represent a strange new mutation in the life of the comic spirit." This strange new comedy reaches toward the fearsome universe of tragedy and the unbalanced universe of farce; "the dance of comedy becomes, in other words, a danse macabre, and the critics who persist in trying neatly to distinguish between the tragic and

[76]Tinsley, Christian Theology and the Frontiers of Tragedy, pp. 23-24.

the comic modes of art end by simply going mad."[77]

We would have been left with the critical antinomy between the emphasis on transcendence and the emphasis on immanence, as well as the inability to deal with the contemporary comedy of the absurd, were it not for an excellent book-length study, The Drama of Comedy: Victim and Victor, by Nelvin Vos,[78] which fits these problems into a larger theological framework.

As many critics did with tragedy, Vos argues that the importance of action in both Christianity and comedy provides the point of contact between the two, and that the task of the Christian theorist of comedy is to examine the relationship between the Christian story, which is essentially the action of the Christ, and the action typical to comedy. First, he notes that there are three traditional foci on the action of Christ: (1) the focus on Christ the Victor, the kingly Messiah, the miracle worker, the raiser of the dead, the one who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and who will come again in glory and judgment. (2) the focus on Christ the Victim, the Suffering Servant, the lowly and unrecognized, the betrayed and rejected, the Sacrificial Lamb slain for the sins of the world. (3) the image of Christ which presents both Victim and Victor together, the New Testament stress on the kenotic Christ's self-emptying and resultant exaltation evident in such words as those of Jesus pointing out that "He who

[77]Samuel Beckett (New York, 1965), pp. 102-103.

[78]Richmond, Va., 1966.

humbles himself will be exalted," or those words predicting his own humiliation and resurrection,[79] or the words of St. Paul: "And being found in human form he [Jesus] humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him."[80]

It is in these three images of Christ's action that we have clues to the patterns of comedy sufficient enough to explain the contradiction between theories of comedy emphasizing transcendence and those emphasizing immanence, and to provide insight into modern nihilistic comedy as well. For Vos does not attempt to generalize about all comedy at once, as other critics have done; instead, he delineates three patterns of comic action corresponding to the three images of Christ's action. Each type of comedy assumes a different world-view as well as a pattern of purpose, passion, and perception on the part of the comic protagonist.[81]

The pattern of comic action which Vos identifies as "The Structure of the Comic Victor" involves an optimistic attitude towards man's place in the world, and stresses his rationality and triumph over difficulties. Here

> the protagonist triumphs because the various intrigues

[79]Vos has in mind such passages as John 10:17 or Mark 9:31.

[80]Philippians 2:8-10 (R.S.V.)

[81]Vos rightly credits this three part movement to Francis Fergusson's The Idea of a Theater.

> of the drama are resolved easily by a fortunate incident or event. Benevolent fortune smiles broadly upon the action, and all loose ends are neatly tied up in a "happily-ever-after" ending and an unambiguous resolution. Heaven is upon earth; sin and evil are not real; folly and ignorance are the only vices men possess. Not only is it often a world of dream and fantasy, but also the festive element is central. A reunion of long-lost relatives or friends, or a marital union, often is the climactic event. The laughter on stage and in the audience is robust and hearty, for frequently the action approaches farce and sheer silliness.

The movement of the comic victor is as follows: "Because, in the first part, the protagonist experiences little or no suffering or passion, in the second part there is nothing to hinder his gaining a perception of an all-encompassing purpose at work in his universe. In the third part, the protagonist triumphs and is victorious over the world's obstacles, not because he has actually chosen or accomplished a significant action, but in spite of his foolishness. Therefore, the fortunate and sociable world of the comic victor is an optimistic world."[82]

This pattern, which seems to me to resemble what P. T. Forsyth had in mind in his "transcendental" theory of comedy, is exemplified in the Greek and Roman comedies, in Shakespeare's early work such as A Comedy of Errors and A Midsummer Night's Dream, in eighteenth-century sentimental comedy, and in the work of George Bernard Shaw, William Saroyan, and Thornton Wilder, whose writing Vos submits to detailed

[82]Vos, The Drama of Comedy, pp. 22-23.

analysis. Wilder's early works, The Cabala, The Bridge of San Luis Rey, and The Woman of Andros, address themselves to the problem of evil among men. In the midst of human decadence, seeming accident, and suffering there are manifestations of divine power which are, by the time Wilder wrote The Woman, clear pointers to the advent of Christ; in other words, Vos summarizes, "The movement in the first three novels . . . is toward a perspective from which the life of man can be seen as part of a divine comedy."[83] In The Long Christmas Dinner and Heaven's My Destination the theme of universal moral values in the midst of ordinary human life is even more explicit. This theme is continued in the more recent long plays. Our Town presents, in tragicomic form, the life of man as it is seen in the light of the great purposes which transcend the details of specific persons and times; the Stage Manager acts as a kind of God-figure who manipulates time and space in conformity to a teleology which moves towards cosmic harmony. The Match-Maker is a light farce in which the protagonist comes to realize that he participates in the foolishness of humanity; and all the lovers in the play, after a minimal amount of suffering, are paired off compatibly and triumphantly. The Skin of Our Teeth presents the entire human race symbolized by the Antrobus family (anthropos = man). The play mixes Old Testament and modern time, depicting alternating cycles of suffering (the ice ages, the Flood, war)

[83]Vos, pp. 35-36.

and hope, but man, despite his disasters and defeats, will survive and progress. Thus in Wilder we see a tone of festivity and good fortune; difficulties and pain are not dominant, and there is no basic incongruity between man and his universe.

A second pattern of comic action is "The Structure of the Comic Victim." In plays displaying this pattern there is portrayed:

> the senselessness and irrationality of human action. The protagonist ends in defeat because the various intrigues of the drama are not untangled, but usually lead to an irresolvable impasse. Capricious fate governs the action, and all the loose ends are often more disconnected at the conclusion. The frustration and desperation found in such works is like an Inferno, and therefore meaninglessness and despair dominate the structure. Not only is it often a world of nightmare and the grotesque, but the sacrificial and death element is central. A separation of relatives or friends, or a suicide is frequently the climactic event. The laughter on stage and in the audience is desperate and hysterical.

The comic victim, too, is involved in a tripartite movement: "Because in the first part no purpose appears to be at work in the protagonist's world, in the second part he arrives at the perception of an all-embracing suffering or passion as the dominant and pervasive quality of life. In the third part, the protagonist is defeated and victimized, because his actions are insignificant and meaningless. Therefore the empty and isolated world of the comic victim is an absurd world."[84] Thus Vos is able to make critical sense of a kind of comedy which puzzled

[84]Vos, p. 26.

Tinsley and Scott. Cited as examples of this drama is the "dark comedy" of Molière, Ben Jonson, and Chekhov, as well as of the dramatists of the "absurd" such as Samuel Beckett, Pirandello, Genet, Adamov, Dürrenmatt, and Ionesco, whose plays are discussed at length.

In Ionesco's The Bald Soprano language itself is rendered absurd. The playwright got the inspiration for the play, he tells us, from the sense of repeated meaninglessness which English words took on when he was memorizing them mechanically to learn the language; he calls the play an "anti-play," a "parody of a play."[85] In The Lesson words become linked with brutal power and domination; at the end the professor's repetition of "Knife" rapes and kills his student-victim. The Chairs and The New Tenant show objects themselves, rather than language, becoming Ionesco's subject matter: reality now is reduced from the human to the material. In The Chairs the hopeless disaster of the old couple is less important than the final dominance of the mocking chairs--all that are left after the human dreams and memories are gone. In The New Tenant the role of character is even further reduced: the tenant is only waiting to be completely overcome by objects.

A complementary theme of Ionesco's plays is the perversion and destruction of human relationships, often portrayed in terms of the interrelationship between a couple. In Amédée an unhappy married couple

[85]Quoted in Vos, p. 57, from Ionesco's essay "The Birth of The Bald Soprano."

is trapped in a living room, a room which is finally invaded by a gigantic corpse which symbolizes the disgust, guilt, and regret the man and wife have accumulated toward each other. Another emphasis in some of the plays is the moment of insight when the protagonist discovers the shabby absurdity of existence. In The Killers Bérenger's terror comes from the recognition of the gratuitous senselessness of death; and subsequently he resigns himself to being its victim. In Rhinoceros the "hero," Bérenger, observes some of his friends becoming rhinoceroses; those who initially resist the transformation begin to feel that it is the animals that are beautiful and humanity abnormal and ugly. Bérenger holds out until the end, but he is utterly alone, the victim of his own illusion of defiance. In contrast, then, to Wilder, Ionesco portrays a world in which the dominant mood is hellish: pain, suffering, and death are dominant, and there is a basic incongruity within man and between man and man, as well as between man and the universe.

But neither the comic victor nor the comic victim does justice to the full Christian story. The comedy of the victor resembles Dante's version of Paradise, characterized by knowledge, agape-love, and joy; the comedy of the victim resembles the Inferno, where there is only self-love, isolation, and the absence of the infinite. The full Christian story is constituted by the complete journey of Dante, whose spiritual center is not the perfection of pure infinity or the horror of pure finitude but their meeting point in the Purgatorio,

where there is purgation through grace leading to reconciliation. The comic action which is analogous to the complete pilgrimage of the Divine Comedy, and to the entire story of Christ as well, involves the passage from victim to victor. In what Vos calls the comedy of the victim-victor,

> the protagonist triumphs, but in an ambiguous way, because he has experienced suffering, has made certain decisions, and has acted according to them. Almost imperceptibly, goodness flits inconspicuously throughout the action and is combined with diabolical evil; the ending is one of complex tension and paradoxical ambiguity. Heaven is interested in earth; sin and evil are real; pride and other forms of self-centeredness are man's imperfections. Not only is it a world of reality and common sense, but festive and sacrificial elements are juxtaposed. Both weddings, the union of two bodies, and death, the separation of body and soul, provide the backdrop of the dramatic structure. The laughter on stage and in the audience's response ranges from the uncontrolled guffaw to sophisticated mirth. The action moves swiftly and unexpectedly from almost tragic seriousness to farcical nonsense.

The movement of the comic victim-victor is also in three parts: "Because, in the first part, the protagonist is convinced that purpose is at work in his world, in the second part, when he experiences suffering or passion, he is put to the test for his conviction. In the third part, he arrives at a new perception of both defeat and triumph, not in spite of his imperfection, but because he has mortified himself and has consented to acknowledge that he is a victim of sin and guilt. Therefore, the sin-ridden and gracious world of the comic victim-victor is the world of faith."[86]

[86]Vos, pp. 24-25.

This "Structure of the Comic Victim-Victor" is evident in such plays as Shakespeare's Measure for Measure and the modern comedies of T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. Fry himself has written that "comedy is an escape, not from truth but from despair: a narrow escape into faith," and that the comment of comedy on the human dilemma is that "there is an angle of experience where the dark is distilled into light, . . . that, groaning as we may be, we move in the figure of a dance, and, so moving, we trace the outline of the mystery."[87] The mystery lies in the fact that the relationship of God to man is neither completely positive, as in Wilder, nor completely negative, as in Ionesco: there are both grace and judgment, love and hate, revelation and enigma, congruity and brokenness in Fry's plays.

In attempting to maintain the mysterious nature of reality, Fry sometimes, as in his early religious festival plays The Boy with a Cart and Thor, with Angels, resorts to the deus ex machina device and is not able to preserve the paradox between revelation and enigma. But in his later comedies, he does represent more carefully the gap between appearance and reality, soul and body, good and evil--as well as the ability to perceive joy in the midst of suffering. In the first comedy, A Phoenix Too Frequent, the love of the lady Dynamene for the soldier Tegeus is saved because of the death of Dynamene's husband Virilius.

[87]Quoted in Vos, pp. 24, 79. Originally from Fry's essay "Comedy," Adelphi, XXVII (November 1950).

A corpse which Tegeus is guarding disappears; he will surely be killed for neglect of duty, but Dynamene substitutes the body of Virilius for the missing corpse. Thus, in a kind of analogy to the substitutionary atonement of Christ, life arises out of death. In The Dark Is Light Enough the character Gettner is moved from indifference and negation by the forgiving, God-like concern of the Countess, until at last he too can love and affirms life by sacrificing himself for another.

And in The Lady's Not for Burning, which Vos analyzes most thoroughly, Thomas, the misanthropic soldier, begins the play in a Sartrean attitude of disgust at life, but before the drama is over he offers, by confessing to the murder of Skipps, to die for Jennet, who is accused of witchcraft. This is an affirmation of human love. Jennet, for her part, begins wanting life but only for its earthly security and pleasure, but she too changes and transcends her desire for security by refusing to purchase her life by succumbing to an attempted seduction. Thus both Thomas and Jennet are condemned to die until Skipps suddenly returns: he is not dead after all but dead drunk, and he absolves the two from their sin and captivity. They have meanwhile attained a new perception of love through suffering.

For Fry, then, we can say that festivity and sacrifice, despair and hope, are inter-related. Furthermore, the relationship between

the infinite and the finite is a complex one. The infinite becomes involved with the finite, grace comes to meet man in his predicament and deliver him from it: this is the mystery to which Fry alludes. It is in this kind of comedy, I think, that the observations of Lynch and Scott are borne out: the finite is fully affirmed as the place where the infinite is experienced. Thus both the immanent and the transcendent are joined in one comic form.

CONCLUSION

If the preceding discussion has accomplished anything, it has supported the generalization at the beginning of Chapter One that Christian Criticism is too diverse to be considered a homogeneous movement, for a wide range of both theological and critical positions is evident among those whom I have considered as Christian Critics. Despite the fact that it might seem out of place in such a study as this, the extreme anti-worldly attitude which has always been present among Christians remains and must be recognized. Several historical reasons can be given for this, which include a certain antiworldliness in Judaism itself (apparent, for instance, in the Essene monasticism which was contemporaneous with the birth of Christianity) that was passed on to the new movement, and the defensive posture of the early Church when, as it spread throughout the civilized world, it confronted the pagan cults which were part of Hellenistic culture and reacted against that culture. This antiworldliness is memorably expressed by the ancient Church Father Tertullian who used two famous cities as symbols of culture and religion, respectively, when he asked: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" We have noticed an echo of this question in the Neo-Orthodox theology of Karl Barth, which strenuously separated the kingdom of God from the kingdom of disobedient and lost

man. We have heard it in the unflattering anthropology of Reinhold Niebuhr, which emphasized man's pride and original sin. Among the literary critics T. E. Hulme was equally as unflattering about human nature, and equally as adamant that the divine and the human be separated--though his concern was to see a revival of art which conformed to the forms of the absolute rather than the human. C. S. Lewis and W. H. Auden, among the younger generation of critics, are (notwithstanding their status as creative writers who deal with theological themes) opposed to the taking of literature seriously: Lewis calls it "recreative," and Auden refers to it as "small beer" for the Christian.

A somewhat modified antiworldliness shows itself in critics like Harold C. Gardiner, who is willing to grant validity to literature that displays a "moral atmosphere" in which man stands in relation to God; if the atmosphere is naturalistic, however, he is willing to censor the work as immoral. Other critics of orthodox persuasions, such as George Every and S. L. Bethell, are so preoccupied with inveighing against the prevailing tendency towards naturalism and secularism that their criticism sometimes becomes almost completely negative. Bethell goes so far as to suggest that the Christian Critic may have to cut himself off from the world of unbelief and write only for Christians a criticism that only they will understand, hoping that he will aid in the development of a "Christian" literature for consumption only within the sacred community. The danger of this antiworldliness is twofold: it either scorns all literature and all

culture, or it tolerates only a specialized literature written for the Christian initiate. Literature reserved for the enlightened and criticism for the select few would be the results of an "elitism" reminiscent of the ancient heresy of gnosticism.

Another sort of antiworldliness, as defensive as the first, does not take refuge from the world by proclaiming the superiority of the Church to the culture outside. Instead it sees the creative imagination as the final sanctuary against the chill hand of scientism and positivism. Most critics taking this point of view see religion as a product, like poetry, of the imagination, and at least as threatened as poetry by the positivistic mentality. Indeed, Matthew Arnold and F. R. Leavis surrender the traditional religious claim to truth; all that remains, then, to shape man's values and interpretations of life is literature. The New Humanists are also liable, as T. S. Eliot charges in "Second Thoughts about Humanism," to make literature do the work of philosophy and theology. But Eliot himself and his followers Allen Tate and Cleanth Brooks, though they try to assert the separate validity of poetry and religious truth, are pressured by the positivistic attack on poetry and religion together to move towards a criticism which deals with both at the same time, since there are no longer any common religious values in modern culture in the light of which literature may be examined.

Neither sort of antiworldliness, however, is characteristic of what I have considered as Christian Criticism. Most modern theological

criticism is not primarily engaged in shoring up the walls of the City of God against the onslaughts of the city of man; instead it is dedicated to the task of building intellectual bridges between the two cities. In this endeavor at least three strategies are discernible. The first strategy is to insist upon the sovereignty of both art and religion; each has its proper sphere, but both spheres are part of the total scheme of truth. This is the position of those who speak of art as an example of "natural" or "general" revelation. The doctrine of natural truth is important especially for those Roman Catholics who find their theological prototype in Thomas Aquinas. Thus, for instance, the French philosopher Jacques Maritain considers creative intuition to be a function of the "illuminating intellect" which is in every man. And he considers art a natural virtue or disposition directed towards the making of artistic objects: this emphasis resembles, as Nathan A. Scott, Jr. has pointed out, the stress by the American New Critics on the aesthetic object. Another critic, Harold C. Gardiner, argues that fiction is capable of showing forth the natural virtues of faith, hope, and charity; these may not be consciously intended by the writer but may be operative inherently in the work itself.

Natural theology has also been traditionally prominent in Anglican theology. H. E. Root calls for a revival of its practice, and notes that it should be founded on accounts of modern consciousness such as are available in literature; similarly, Amos N. Wilder and Frederick A. Pottle contend that literature should be regarded as displaying

natural truth. The problem with most natural theology is that it presupposes that the universe and human life in it can be made sense of by the human mind without special help from God; this, in turn, presupposes a rather high view of man's rational faculties. The traditional Protestant position is that man's sinfulness prevents him from arriving at truth, at least truth about God or his own spiritual condition, unaided by divine grace in Christ. In addition, many modern thinkers, Christians among them, have called into question the intelligibility of the world as well as man's ability to ascertain purpose and structure in either the universe or his own life. David Baily Harned in his recent version of a distinctly Protestant approach to natural theology does not take up such epistemological or cosmological questions but concerns himself with the relationship of man to man in Christ. All that tends towards "community," the faith and love-of-neighbor for which Christ is the model, is natural, he proposes. Art is conducive to community inasmuch as it shapes and structures human impulses, inasmuch as it affirms the coherence and worth of human experience, and inasmuch as it keeps language from descending into sterile and stereotyped jargon which prevents genuine human encounter.

The second strategy is to see the city of culture in some sense as preparatory to, or a symbol or shadow of, the divine city. The various "theologies of culture" recognize that the theologian must study man's cultural expressions to ascertain the dilemmas and crises to which the gospel is to be addressed. For the early Tillich art indicated

that modern man was rejecting the demonic romanticism and idealism that had blinded him to the realities of his situation; at the same time reality was being seen as symbolic of the eternal and unconditioned. More simply, Halford E. Luccock regarded literature as the expression of the life of the times, sometimes displaying the search for God. And Amos N. Wilder contends that one must look to the artists because they are the most sensitive to changes in the cultural climate.

Examination of art as a propaedeutic for theology later became central to Tillich's theological methodology, which is to correlate the presentation of the Christian message to the questions raised by man's cultural expressions. This is possible because art reveals man's ultimate concern, that which engages his total passion and interest; it has the dimension of "depth"; it takes on symbolic significance and points beyond itself to the ground of all being, or God. Thus for Tillich there is ultimately no separable secularity or worldliness, cultural or otherwise. The philosophy of Nicolas Berdyaev is equally as mystical: he views art as evidence of man's urge to break out of the confines of his finitude into infinite freedom: what is important is not the specific art object, which itself is only a finite symbol of creativity, but the creative impulse by which man participates in the creativity of God. The relation of human to divine creativity is recognized by many of the critics (and perhaps was of interest even to the ancient Greeks); Dorothy L. Sayers uses the dogma of the Trinity as the model for a detailed discussion of creativity as a tripartite

process analogous to the activity of the three divine Persons in the Godhead.

The primacy of the City of God is also evident in the discussion of the relationship between Christianity and tragedy. Often it is used as an argument against the feasibility of Christian tragedy: it is contended by such men as Reinhold Niebuhr, Karl Jaspers, and I. A. Richards that tragedy pits man against God or portrays man as mortal and finite, without God, whereas Christianity transcends doubt with faith, death with resurrection. On somewhat the same grounds Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier argues that the double perspective of tragedy by which the spectator perceives that the seemingly irreconcilable discrepancies experienced in tragedy (such as vitality vs. form, good vs. evil) are united in a higher vision of the infinite whole; yet he is asked to take the hero's dilemmas seriously. Such a precarious paradox is denied by the biblical philosophy: here there is only one perspective, for God is creator of both heaven and earth, and therefore there is no ultimate distinction, as in tragedy, between the finite and the infinite; furthermore, the moral choices made on the finite level are not dissolved in some final cosmic neutrality. Some critics, like Roy W. Battenhouse and J. A. Bryant, Jr., see tragedy as the reflection of the essentially Old Testament story of man in which there is the fall but no redemption. The full Christian story, in contrast, is not tragic but comic, for man is redeemed. G. Wilson Knight recognizes no such differentiation: he holds that the tragic hero, like

Christ, suffers defeat but finally triumphs. The weakness of Knight's theory is that it would be hard to distinguish his version of tragedy from tragicomedy or comedy.

The danger with theories which assert the supremacy of the City of God is just the opposite of that which was noted in Arnold. Arnold felt that religion was being superseded by the poetic; these critics could be said to be courting pantheism by emphasizing the sacral dimension of all things: poetry is swallowed up in religion. When Tillich, to cite what is perhaps an extreme example, writes that all which is secular stands in relationship to the holy, he is not allowing secularity or createdness sufficient status apart from the divine.

Among those critics who are committed to the third strategy, the city of man, this world, is conceived of as the place where God acts and not as an outpost alienated from him. This essentially dramatic metaphor seems to me to characterize a view which, more than either of the other two strategies, does justice to both religion and art. The Christian Critics who hold this third position usually draw upon the Incarnation as proof that the divine is not identical with the world, yet it is intimately related to it. G. Wilson Knight and Gerardus van der Leeuw are only two of the major critics who regard the coming of God to the world in Christ as constituting a validation by the Creator of the human and the worldly. William F. Lynch, and Nathan A. Scott, Jr. following him, resist the tendency among modern writers and critics towards "angelism," a preoccupation with the ideological

or the spiritual; the Incarnation, they claim, is the basis for the Christian insistence that the physical and the concrete are not to be slighted in the name of any abstraction. For some critics such as Malcolm Ross, H. D. Lewis, and Austin Farrer, the Incarnation (and its extension in time, the Eucharist) substantiates the symbolic nature of things and events as possessing both literal and spiritual significance. And for other critics, such as Lynch, E. J. Tinsley, and Preston T. Roberts, Jr., tragedy, like the Incarnation, involves a descent into human agony and despair. Comedy, too, it is argued by Lynch, Nelvin Vos, and others, focuses on the foibles and limitations of man but finally affirms that the world and man in it are essentially and ultimately redeemable.

The danger among those who stress the importance of the worldly and the secular is that they may lose sight of the divine. This is not true with regard to most of the Christian Critics; it can be charged, however, against the "radical" theologians who proclaim the death of the traditional image of a transcendent God, and declare that the sacred must be found in the midst of the secular. How are we to react to the preoccupation with literary art which is typical of them? Are they merely following the example of the theologians of culture and documenting their analysis of a world "come of age" with literary evidence? Or are they, like Matthew Arnold before them, saying that whatever is revelatory for contemporary post-Christian man is the product not of some supernatural being but of man's own creative

imagination? It is too early, I think, adequately to plot the course of the new secularism in its relation to art, and so a definitive answer to such questions must wait.

It is clear to me, nevertheless, that the most promising critical theories are those which have emphasized the importance of the concrete and specific in human experience and in art. In this way they provide for the close attention to the work of art itself which is the legacy of the New Criticism; and they also, because of their theological orientation, are able to deal with the meaning of art, a concern which is lost sight of when criticism becomes (as sometimes has been the case in recent years) mere textual analysis. I am not forgetting the obvious fact that the test of any critical theory is the quality of the practical criticism which issues from it. This study has not attempted to canvass practical Christian Criticism; at the risk of overgeneralizing, however, I would suggest that among Christian Critics those who are aware of the implications of the Incarnation for a Christian view of art have produced most of the criticism of specific writers and specific works.

In closing I would like to observe that in spite of the virtues of the "incarnational" approach, it must be admitted that Christian Criticism as a whole is constantly threatened by two opposing tendencies at the same time. Since theological criticism is an effort to unite the separate studies of theology and literary criticism into one new discipline, it runs the risk of being lopsided, favoring either

theology or criticism while slighting the other. Some theories of theological criticism can be seen to be distorted, and I attempted to point out defects in them as I considered the various critics. But some theological criticism, I have asserted, is able to hold theology and criticism in a fruitful tension. Nonetheless, it is still true that if one comes to it despising theology in the name of man and his culture, or despising literature in the name of God, he will destroy the balance needed to sustain Christian Criticism: its effectiveness is therefore dependent, to some extent, on the sympathy of the reader. Now one need not be a "believer" to be sympathetic; but he can no more read theological criticism effectively if he is predisposed to be hostile to theology than he can effectively read a poem if he is predisposed to be hostile to poetry in general, or to the poet, as Eliot has pointed out. This element of sympathy, coupled with the fact that many contemporary intellectuals have (rightly or wrongly) strong anti-religious feelings, probably means that Christian Criticism will never be as widely attractive as criticism which does not demand knowledge of theology or at least interest in it. But at the very least Christian Criticism stands as an impressive attempt by Christian readers of literature to come to grips with it as whole men, resisting the temptation to leave behind their faith. And it cannot be denied that the best Christian Criticism adds a new dimension of meaning to the works being considered.

LIST OF WORKS CITED

Essays in collections of works by one author are not listed separately unless the collection is edited by someone other than the author.

Altizer, T. J. J., and William Hamilton. Radical Theology and the Death of God. Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc., 1966.

Arnold, Matthew. Literature and Dogma. New York: Macmillan Co., 1914.

----------. "The Study of Poetry," in Essays in Criticism, Second Series, ed. S. R. Littlewood. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964.

Auden, W. H. "The Christian Tragic Hero," The New York Times Book Review, December 16, 1945, pp. 1, 21.

----------. The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays. New York: Random House, 1962.

----------. "Introduction" to The Portable Greek Reader. New York: Viking Press, 1950.

Auerbach, Erich. Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1953.

Babbitt, Irving. "Humanism: An Essay at Definition," in Humanism and America, ed. Norman Foerster. New York: Farrer and Rinehart, Inc., 1930.

Barnet, Sylvan. "Some Limitations of a Christian Approach to Shakespeare," ELH, XXII (June 1955), 81-92.

Barth, Karl. The Epistle to the Romans, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

----------. The Humanity of God. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1960.

Battenhouse, Roy W. "The Relation of Theology to Literary Criticism," Journal of Bible and Religion, XIII (February 1945), 16-22.

----------. "Shakespearean Tragedy: A Christian Interpretation," in The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Association Press, 1957.

Bentley, Eric. The Importance of Scrutiny. New York: New York University Press, 1964.

Berdyaev, Nicolas. The Destiny of Man, trans. Natalie Duddington. 2nd ed. London: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd., 1945.

----------. Dostoievsky, trans. Donald Atwater. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1934.

----------. Dream and Reality, trans. Katherine Lampert. London: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd., 1950.

----------. Freedom and the Spirit, trans. Oliver F. Clarke. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.

----------. The Meaning of History, trans. George Reavey. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

----------. The Meaning of the Creative Act, trans. Donald A. Lowrie. New York: Harper & Bros., 1955.

Bethell, S. L. "Christianity and Culture: Replies to Mr. Lewis," Theology, XL (May 1940), 356-362.

----------. Essays on Literary Criticism and the English Tradition. London: Denis Dobson, Ltd., 1948.

----------. The Literary Outlook. London: Sheldon Press, 1943.

Bloom, Edward A. "The Vatic Temper in Literary Criticism," Criticism, V (1963), 297-315.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Letters and Papers from Prison, ed. Eberhard Bethge. 3rd ed. New York: Macmillan Co., 1967.

Bradner, Leicester. Incarnation in Religion and Literature. Faculty Papers, 4th series. New York: National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1957.

Brett, Ray. "The Function of Literary Imagery in Christian Understanding," Christian Scholar, XXXVI (June 1953), 92-99.

Bridge, A. C. Images of God: An Essay on the Life and Death of Symbols. London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1960.

Brooks, Cleanth. "Christianity, Myth, and the Symbolism of Poetry," in Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, ed. Finley Eversole. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

----------. The Hidden God. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.

----------. "Metaphor and the Function of Criticism," in Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. Stanley R. Hopper. New York: Harper & Bros. for the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1952.

Bryant, J. A., Jr. Hippolyta's View: Some Christian Aspects of Shakespeare's Plays. Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Press, 1961.

----------. "Shakespeare's Allegory: The Winter's Tale," Sewanee Review, LXIII (1955), 202-222.

Buckley, Vincent. Poetry and Morality. London: Chatto & Windus, Ltd., 1959.

Bultmann, Rudolph. Jesus Christ and Mythology. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

----------. "New Testament and Mythology," in Kerygma and Myth, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch and trans. Reginald H. Fuller. Harper Torchbooks. Rev. ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1961.

Cairns, David. "Natural Theology," in A Handbook of Christian Theology, ed. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen. Living Age Books. New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958.

Cary, Norman Reed. "An Apologetic for Christian Criticism: A Comment on 'The Vatic Temper in Literary Criticism,'" Criticism, VI (1964), 266-271.

Cassirer, Ernst. Language and Myth, trans. Susanne Langer. New York: Harper & Bros., 1946.

Cherbonnier, Edmond LaB. "Biblical Faith and the Idea of Tragedy," in The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Association Press, 1957.

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Biographia Literaria, ed. John Shawcross. 2 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1907.

----------. The Complete Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. W. G. T. Shedd. 7 vols. New York: Harper & Bros., 1871-1878.

Eliot, T. S. After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1934.

----------. On Poetry and Poets. New York: Farrer, Straus & Cudahy, 1957.

----------. Selected Essays. 3rd ed. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1951.

----------. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1933.

Elman, Paul. "Twice-Blessed Enamel Flowers: Reality in Contemporary Fiction," in The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Seabury Press, 1964.

Else, Gerald F. Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Every, George. Christian Discrimination. London: Sheldon Press, 1940.

----------. "In Defence of Criticism," Theology, XLI (September 1940), 159-165.

----------. "The Necessity of Scrutiny," Theology, XXXVIII (March 1939), 176-186.

----------. Poetry and Personal Responsibility. London: S.C.M. Press, 1949.

Farrer, Austin. The Glass of Vision. Westminster: Dacre Press, 1948.

Forsyth, P. T. Christ on Parnassus: Lectures on Art, Ethic, and Theology. London: Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., 1912.

Frye, Roland M. Perspective on Man: Literature and the Christian Tradition. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961.

----------. Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Fuller, Edmund. Books With Men Behind Them. New York: Random House, 1962.

----------. Man in Modern Fiction. New York: Random House, 1958.

Gardiner, Harold C., ed. Fifty Years of the American Novel, 1900-1950: A Christian Appraisal. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951.

----------. In All Conscience: Reflections on Books and Culture. Garden City, N. Y.: Hanover House, 1959.

----------. Norms for the Novel. New York: America Press, 1953.

Glencross, A. F. "Christian Tragedy," in A Christian Approach to Western Literature, ed. Aloysius A. Norton and Joan T. Nourse. Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961.

Hamilton, William. The New Essence of Christianity. New York: Association Press, 1966.

Hanna, Thomas L. "A Question: What Does One Mean by 'Religious Literature'?" in Mansions of the Spirit, ed. George A. Panichas. New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1967.

Harned, David Baily. Theology and the Arts. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966.

Hazelton, Roger. New Accents in Contemporary Theology. New York: Harper & Bros., 1960.

Heines, Donald Scott. "Problems of Literary Criticism and Theological Perspectives." Unpublished dissertation. Columbia University, 1964.

Henn, T. R. The Harvest of Tragedy. Rev. ed. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966.

Hepburn, Ronald W. "Poetry and Religious Belief," in Metaphysical Beliefs, ed. Alasdair MacIntyre. London: S.C.M. Press, 1957.

Holthusen, Hans Egon. "What is Christian in a Christian Literature?" in Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, ed. Finley Eversole. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

Hulme, T. E. Speculations, ed. Herbert Read. 2nd ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1936.

James, D. G. Scepticism and Poetry: An Essay on the Poetic Imagination. London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1937.

Jarrett-Kerr, Martin. Studies in Literature and Belief. London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1954.

Jaspers, Karl. Tragedy Is Not Enough, trans. H. A. T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore, and Karl W. Deutsch. London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1953.

Jones, David. "Art and Sacrament," in The New Orpheus: Essays Toward a Christian Poetic, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964.

Knight, G. Wilson. The Christian Renaissance. 2nd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962.

----------. Shakespearean Production. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

----------. The Wheel of Fire. London: Oxford University Press, 1930.

Krumm, John McGill. "Theology and Literature: The Terms of the Dialogue on the Modern Scene," in The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Seabury Press, 1964.

Leavis, F. R. The Common Pursuit. London: Chatto & Windus, Ltd., 1952.

Leavis, Q. D. "Charlotte Yonge and 'Christian Discrimination,'" Scrutiny, XII (1943), 152-160.

Leeuw, Gerardus van der. Sacred and Profane Beauty: The Holy in Art, trans. David E. Green and preface by Mircea Eliade. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1963.

Lewis, C. S. "Christianity and Culture," Theology, XL (March 1940), 166-179.

Lewis, H. D. Morals and Revelation. London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1951.

Little, Arthur. The Nature of Art. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946.

Luccock, Halford E. Contemporary American Literature and Religion. Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1934.

Lynch, William F. Christ and Apollo: The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1960.

----------. "Theology and the Imagination," Thought, XXIX (Spring 1954), 61-86.

McCarron, Hugh. Realization: A Philosophy of Poetry. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937.

Machen, Arthur. Hieroglyphics. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923.

Mackintosh, Hugh Ross. Types of Modern Theology: Schleiermacher to Barth. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937.

Macquarrie, John. Twentieth-Century Religious Thought: The Frontiers of Philosophy and Theology, 1900-1960. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.

Maritain, Jacques. Art and Scholasticism and The Frontiers of Poetry, trans. Joseph W. Evans. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962.

----------. Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry. New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1953.

----------. The Degrees of Knowledge, trans. Bernard Wall and Margot R. Adamson. London: Geoffrey Bles, Ltd., 1937.

----------. The Responsibility of the Artist. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960.

----------, and Raissa Maritain. The Situation of Poetry, trans. Marshall Suther. New York: Philosophical Library, 1955.

Mercier, Désiré. A Manual of Modern Scholastic Poetry, trans. T. L. Parker and S. A. Parker. 2 vols. London: Kegan Paul, 1926.

Michel, Laurence. "The Possibility of a Christian Tragedy," Thought, XXXI (Autumn 1956), 403-428.

Nicholson, Norman. Man and Literature. London: S.C.M. Press, 1943.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937.

----------. An Interpretation of Christian Ethics. New York: Harper & Bros., 1935.

----------. The Nature and Destiny of Man. 2 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

Persson, Per Erik. "The Reformation in Recent Roman Catholic Theology," in New Theology No. 1, ed. Martin E. Marty and Dean G. Peerman. New York: Macmillan Co., 1964.

Pottle, Frederick A. Christian Teaching of Literature. Faculty Papers, 3rd series. New York: National Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church, 1956.

Ramsey, Arthur Michael. An Era in Anglican Theology: From Gore to Temple. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960.

Randall, John H., Jr. Aristotle. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

Raphael, David Daiches. The Paradox of Tragedy. London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1960.

Richards, I. A. Principles of Literary Criticism. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1925.

Roberts, David E. "Christian Faith and Greek Tragedy," Religion in Life, XVIII (1948), 79-89.

----------. Existentialism and Religious Belief. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.

Roberts, Michael. "The Moral Influence of Poetry," Theology, XXXIX (January 1939), 16-25.

Roberts, Preston T., Jr. "A Christian Theory of Dramatic Tragedy," in The New Orpheus: Essays Toward a Christian Poetic, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1964.

Root, H. E. "Beginning All Over Again," in Soundings, ed. A. R. Vidler. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962.

Ross, Malcolm. Poetry and Dogma. New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1954.

Rougement, Denis de. "Religion and the Mission of the Artist," in Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. Stanley R. Hopper. New York: Harper & Bros. for the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1952.

Sayers, Dorothy L. The Mind of the Maker. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1941.

Schwartz, Delmore. "The Vocation of the Poet in the Modern World," in Spiritual Problems in Contemporary Literature, ed. Stanley R. Hopper. New York: Harper & Bros. for the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1952.

Scott, Nathan A., Jr. The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

----------. "Faith and Art in a World Awry," in The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Seabury Press, 1964.

----------. "Maritain in His Role as Aesthetician," The Review of Metaphysics, VIII (March 1955), 480-492.

----------. Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier. New York: Harper & Bros., 1958.

----------. Rehearsals of Discomposure: Alienation and Reconciliation in Modern Literature. New York: King's Crown Press of Columbia University Press, 1952.

----------. "The Relation of Theology to Literary Criticism," Journal of Religion, XXXIII (October 1953), 266-277.

----------. "Religious Symbolism in Contemporary Literature," in Religious Symbolism, ed. F. Ernest Johnson. New York: Harper & Bros. for the Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1955.

----------. Samuel Beckett. New York: Hillary House Publishers, Ltd., 1965.

Scott-Craig, T. S. K. "Christianity and Poetry," Theology, XLI (July 1940), 25-30.

Sewall, Richard. The Vision of Tragedy. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

Shaftesbury, Anthony [Ashley Cooper, Third] Earl of. Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. 3 vols. 5th ed. Birmingham: John Baskerville, 1773.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck. 10 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926-1930.

Smedes, Lewis B. The Incarnation: Trends in Modern Anglican Thought. Kampen, Holland: J. H. Kok, 1953.

Spingarn, J. E. A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1908.

Stallman, Robert Wooster. "The New Critics," in Critiques and Essays in Criticism: 1920-1948, ed. Robert Wooster Stallman. New York: Ronald Press Co., 1949.

Stewart, Douglas. The Ark of God: Studies in Five Modern Novelists. London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1961.

Stewart, Randall. American Literature and Christian Doctrine. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1958.

Strong, A. H. The Great Poets and Their Theology. Philadelphia: Griffith and Rowland Press, 1897.

Tate, Allen. Collected Essays. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1959.

Temple, William. Nature, Man and God. London: Macmillan Co., 1940.

TeSelle, Sallie M. Literature and the Christian Life. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

Tillich, Paul. "Existentialist Aspects of Modern Art," in Christianity and the Existentialists, ed. Carl Michalson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.

----------. The Interpretation of History, trans. N. A. Rasetzski and Elsa L. Talmey. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

----------. "The Meaning and Justification of Religious Symbols," in Religious Experience and Truth, ed. Sidney Hook. New York: New York University Press, 1961.

----------. The Protestant Era, trans. James Luther Adams. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948.

----------. The Religious Situation, trans. H. Richard Niebuhr. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932.

----------. "The Religious Symbol," in Religious Experience and Truth, ed. Sidney Hook. New York: New York University Press, 1961.

----------. Systematic Theology. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951-1963.

----------. Theology of Culture, ed. Robert Kimball. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Tinsley, E. J. Christian Theology and the Frontiers of Tragedy. Leeds, England: Leeds University Press, 1963.

----------. "The Incarnation and Art," in The Church and the Arts, ed. Frank J. Glendenning. London: S.C.M. Press, 1960.

Turnell, Martin. Modern Literature and the Christian Faith. Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961.

----------. Poetry and Crisis. London: Sands: The Paladin Press, 1938.

Ulanov, Barry. The Rhetoric of Christian Comedy. The McAuley Lecture Series, 1961. W. Hartford, Conn.: St. Joseph College, 1962.

Vahanian, Gabriel. The Death of God. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1961.

----------. Wait Without Idols. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1964.

Van Buren, Paul. The Secular Meaning of the Gospel. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963.

Vos, Nelvin. The Drama of Comedy: Victim and Victor. Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1966.

Waggoner, Hyatt H. "William Faulkner's Passion Week of the Heart," in The Tragic Vision and the Christian Faith, ed. Nathan A. Scott, Jr. New York: Association Press, 1957.

Walker, Williston. A History of the Christian Church. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918.

Watkin, E. I. Poets and Mystics. London: Sheed & Ward, 1953.

Wellek, René. A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950. 4 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955-1965.

----------, and Austin Warren. Theory of Literature. Harvest Books. 2nd Ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1956.

Wilder, Amos N. "Christianity and the Arts: The Historic Divorce and the Contemporary Situation," Christian Scholar, XL (December 1957), 261-268.

----------. Modern Poetry and the Christian Tradition. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

----------. "Poetry and Religion," in Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts, ed. Finley Eversole. New York: Abingdon Press, 1962.

----------. "Scholars, Theologians, and Ancient Rhetoric," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXV (1956), 1-11.

----------. The Spiritual Aspects of the New Poetry. New York: Harper & Bros., 1940.

----------. Theology and Modern Literature. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958.

Willey, Basil. Coleridge on Imagination and Fancy. London: Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1947.

Wimsatt, William K., Jr., and Cleanth Brooks. Literary Criticism: A Short History. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Norman Reed Cary was born in East Cleveland, Ohio, on December 31, 1936. He attended public schools in Cleveland and East Cleveland. He majored in English at Asbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky, and was graduated with the B. A. in 1958. He was a graduate teaching assistant at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and received his M. A. in English from that institution in 1960. For one year, 1960-1961, he was enrolled in the Religion and Art program of the Federated Theological Faculty of the University of Chicago. In the fall of 1961 he became a graduate teaching assistant and entered the Ph.D. program in English at Wayne State University. In 1965 he became an Instructor at Wayne. In 1967 he became an Instructor in English at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

His honors include the B. A. magna cum laude; an Entrance Fellowship to the Chicago Theological Seminary for study under the Federated Theological Faculty; and membership in Phi Beta Kappa. He is also a member of the Modern Language Association.

Publications

Cary, Norman Reed, "An Apologetic for Christian Criticism: A Comment on 'The Vatic Temper in Literary Criticism,'" Criticism, VI (1964), 266-272.

_____. Rev. of Paul Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions (New York, 1962), Universitas: A Journal of Religion and the University (Detroit), I (1963), 74-77.

_____, John Ehrstine, and John Reist. "Bibliography of Religion and Literature--1962," Universitas, I (1963), 106-117.

_____, and Ardath Casselman. "Bibliography of Religion and Literature--1963," Universitas, II (1964), 120-128.